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"SHALL I TELL YOU OF SOMEONE WHO, I THINK, WANTS TO MARRY YOU!" SAID PHILIP.

LILIAN'S LOVER.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"I SAY, Lily, I wish you'd invite Rose Langley to come and pay us a visit. It's awfully slow for me now you and Lancaster spend so much time together."

Lilian Northbrook blushed, but, ignoring the latter part of her brother's remark, she replied,—

"Rose Langley isn't a nice girl, Philip!"

"That's where you and I differ," said the young man, with a light laugh. "I think her an uncommonly nice girl. But, perhaps, you are afraid of Lancaster falling in love with her."

His sister's proud, beautiful lips curved with scorn as she replied, disdainfully,—

"Rose Langley is about the last woman in the world of whom I should think of being jealous; the idea is simply preposterous!"

"In that case you can have no reasonable objection to inviting her here!"

But Philip always got what he made up his mind to have, and the present case proved no exception to the general rule. After a little more worrying on his part Lilian promised to tell their father what she proposed to do; and if he made no objection she would then invite Rose to Hazelwode.

"Please yourself, my dear!" replied Colonel Northbrook, when the invitation was mentioned to him; "I suppose girls always will want the society of other girls."

Later in the evening Wilfred Lancaster looked in, as was his wont, and was received coldly by the colonel, though warmly enough by the young people.

In point of fact, the master of Hazelwode did not approve of Lancaster as a suitor for Lilian's hand, and when his consent to their engagement was asked he had very decidedly refused it.

But the state of discomfort into which even he himself was plunged after this decision was announced, and the terrible effect that it had upon Lilian's health, induced him to consent to a compromise; his refusal was withdrawn, and Wilfred was allowed to visit the house on condi-

tion that there should be no recognised engagement until he should be in a position to provide for a wife.

Had the colonel been a rich man, and able to spend several months of the year in London, he would, no doubt, have found amusement enough for himself; but money was not a plentiful commodity with the master of Hazelwode, and though he lived in a good house and owned a farm or two, he could call very little beyond this his own, with the exception of his half-pay.

His only son, Philip, had been something of a disappointment. He had failed to pass his examination for a direct commission in the army, and now he was trying to slip in through the militia.

Lilian inherited a hundred a-year from her mother, and her undoubted beauty fully justified her father's ambitious hopes on her behalf, and he quite expected that she would marry a man of good position in the county.

"I shall not see you for a week or two," said Wilfred Lancaster, as he held Lilian's hand in his own during the few brief moments they were alone together just before his departure, "I go to

London to-morrow, and I shall have passed through the ordeal of my examination before I return. I carry your good wishes with me, Lily, I know."

"Yes; I hope you will succeed for both our sakes," she replied, earnestly.

"You will marry me, and go out to India with me if I succeed, won't you, Lily, darling?" asked Wilfred, as he clasped her in his arms.

"Yes, I will," she replied, fondly; "nothing shall prevent me."

A rapturous kiss followed; then he released her from his embrace, and took his leave. He walked slowly and thoughtfully towards the small house in which he and his mother resided, and was bearing his destination, when suddenly he heard the sound of footsteps, and likewise a woman's voice in mingled expostulation and entreaty. The next instant Milly Dartwell, the daughter of a small farmer, came up to him, panting for breath.

"Oh, help me! pray help me!" she gasped, and then recognizing him, she added, apologetically, "Mr. Lancaster, may I walk by your side till we come to your house? I've been dreadfully frightened by a man over there."

"Certainly, come along with me. But who is the man that has frightened you? Do you know him?"

"No," she replied, with evident reluctance; but he judged by her tone that she did know the man in question, and had probably come out to meet him, though she did not care to mention his name.

"It's very late for you to be out alone!" he remarked, as they walked along together.

"Yes, it is," she replied, promptly. "I'd been over to Incheliff farm to tea, and I didn't come away till late, and I wouldn't let them send anybody with me; and the walk was so pleasant that I forgot how the time was slipping by. But I'll be all right now—I'm glad I met you, sir!"

"Perhaps it was fortunate," he replied, coldly, and the next moment he wished his companion in any spot under heaven but by his side; for a horseman coming along the road recognized him and her, though to make quite sure of his man he called out,—

"Good-night, Lancaster!"

"Good-night, Raymond!" was the answer.

Then Edgar Raymond went on his way, and Wilfred Lancaster quickened his pace till he reached his mother's gate.

"You will be quite safe now, Miss Dartwell," he said coldly, lifting his hat. "I don't think I need offer to see you any farther!"

"No, sir, I am all right now, thank you; it was very kind of you to let me come with you so far, and I'm mighty obliged, I'm sure."

And Miss Milly tossed her head and felt that she had been exceedingly rational.

When he entered the house, however, he found his mother waiting for him.

She was full of hope and fear for the future of her boy, who was all that she had had to live for since the death of his father, which had occurred soon after their son's birth.

CHAPTER II.

ROSE LANGLEY had been at Hazelwode a week, and already a change had come over Colonel Northbrook and his family.

This change is a very subtle one, and is not perceptible to outsiders, but Lillian sees and feels it, and, worse than all, she is powerless to check the current as it daily grows stronger.

On the arrival of the young beauty Philip seemed to consider that she had been invited for his amusement, and that he had a perfect right to monopolise her time and attention.

But Miss Rose was of a very different way of thinking.

In the first place, she recognised the desirability of being on very good terms with Lillian—for she never allowed her vanity to carry her so far as to make another woman feel herself neglected for her sake, unless she felt quite certain that she could afford to despise her enmity, and in the

next she determined to stand well with the Colonel himself.

And in this she succeeded.

If any excursion were proposed, or if any little concession were to be gained, she would look her small, white hands over the colonel's arm, and looking up to his face, as though she were pleading for a kiss, would say, "Do let us go," or "do let us stay," as the case might be, in a tone that was altogether irresistible.

Lillian stood, a few weeks after Rose's arrival, and watched a group in the garden.

There was Rose Langley, with her yellow curly hair, her round blue eyes, pink and white complexion, and petite, doll-like form, full of vivacity, and apparently thinking that her whole business in life was to amuse and be amused.

And Colonel Northbrook, tall, stately, handsome, with his brown eyes and dark eyebrows, presenting such a singular contrast to the silvery whiteness of his moustache and beard, every inch a soldier, and making his son Philip look like a mere stripling by his side—though he, in his way, was handsome.

The most ungainly of the quartette was Edgar Raymond, one of the largest landowners in the neighbourhood.

He was as tall as Colonel Northbrook; but he was stout, with a lumpy heaviness about him that reminded you unpleasantly of one of his own prize cattle.

His hair was red, his complexion was florid, and his features were coarse; while he was loud and noisy in his talk, and aggressive in his manners—though, like all bullies, he was at heart a most pitiful coward.

From his boyhood he had been an avowed admirer of Lillian Northbrook; but he had never, at any time, found favour in her sight, and, therefore, she never considered that he had any ground for complaint when, despite her father's frowns, she showed a marked and determined preference for Wilfred Lancaster.

Edgar Raymond thought otherwise, however, and he cherished a malignant hatred towards his rival, that only needed a fitting opportunity for showing itself.

Despite Miss Langley's pretensions, and her evident desire to please him, the young squire's eyes constantly wandered towards the windows of the house, and at length, catching sight of Lillian in the drawing-room, he lifted his hat and advanced towards her.

Divining his intention, however, and feeling a great aversion to a tête-à-tête with her persistent admirer, our heroine stepped out from the French window and came to meet him.

"How do you do?" she said, giving him her hand carelessly, and withdrawing it after it had rested in his own for barely a second. "Have you come over to play lawn-tennis?"

"No, I came to see you," he replied, reproachfully.

"You might have come to do both," she returned indifferently, joining the others.

Raymond bit the finger of one of his gloves and followed her—he had really come over to Hazelwode with the intention of making mischief, and he was wondering how he could most effectually set about it.

He was never good at conversation unless it was about cattle, horses or dogs, and now stood silent, big, and stupid, until Colonel Northbrook began to talk to him about the crops and the probable failure of the harvest.

But a full half-hour had passed before he could find an opportunity for saying what he had come to say, and they were all seated in basket-chairs on the lawn, while Lillian poured out tea, and Rose helped herself and others to cake and fruit, before Raymond said, quietly,—

"So I hear, Lancaster has gone away for good."

"Indeed!" retorted Lillian, while her usually pale face slightly flushed. "I understood that Mr. Lancaster had gone to London for a week or two only."

"Perhaps you're right. If he had been going for good he would probably have said good-bye to me when I met him with Milly Dartwell the other night, unless it was that he was so taken up with her that he forgot everything else."

Lillian made no reply. She would have disdained to ask a question that should seem to cast a doubt upon her lover; and she knew Edgar Raymond too well to attach much importance to any bit of scandal he might circulate.

But Colonel Northbrook, ever anxious to find some flaw in the man whom his daughter loved, asked,—

"When did you meet Lancaster with widow Dartwell's lass?"

"Tuesday night of last week," was the answer.

"He was here that night!" interposed Philip.

"You must have made a mistake, Raymond."

"Oh! I didn't make any mistake," laughed the other; "for I spoke to him, and he answered me; and Milly Dartwell was up close to his side. Praps he'd been saying good-bye to her."

"What time was this?" asked the Colonel, coldly.

"A quarter to eleven o'clock. I know, for I looked at my watch when I'd passed them."

Lillian glanced at her brother, and as their eyes met her proud lip curled with contempt for the man who had acted as spy upon his neighbour.

"I have not the least doubt that he met this girl by accident. It would never have occurred to me to notice, or to remember anything of the kind."

Philip said this in such a tone that Raymond—thick-skinned as he was—felt the sneer, and determined to pay him out for it.

So finding that Lillian was even more cold and repellent in her manner to him than usual he changed the subject, and turning to the Colonel said, carelessly,—

"By the way, I'd almost forgotten to give my mother's message. She wants to know if you'll all come over to us one afternoon this week and stay to dinner."

"Thank you, but we are engaged for to-morrow and Saturday, and to-day is Thursday," said Lillian, promptly. "Give my love to your mother, and tell her it is impossible."

"Well, you can come over one day next week if you are engaged for this, can't you?" persisted Raymond. "I've got over so many things I should like to show Miss Langley; and I bought a dancing bear the other day—he's such a comical fellow!"

"I suppose you and he are very good friends, aren't you?" asked Lillian with such a glance at her brother that he could scarcely repress his laughter.

"Yes, rather; but Bill is such a treacherous fellow I'm obliged to keep him chained, and the dog has a perfect hatred of him!"

"Oh! I must see him!" exclaimed Rose, clasping her hands. "I was always fond of bears. When I was a little girl I used to make my nurse take me every day to the Zoo, and I always carried a bun each for the bears. I suppose you haven't got a pole for Bill to climb up, have you, Mr. Raymond?"

"I've got a pole but not a bear-pit, and I shouldn't care to trust Bill without his chain. But you will come over and see him, won't you, Colonel?"

"Oh! yes, we will come," was the reply.

"Are we engaged for Tuesday next, Lillian?"

"No, papa."

"Then we'll come that day," said the colonel.

His daughter, however, made no remark. The story about Wilfred and Milly Dartwell had annoyed rather than pained her, for she did not doubt her lover for an instant; but the whole tone of the conversation, added to Rose Langley's gushing manners and little stabbing speeches, had helped to irritate her, and she had no inclination to visit Raymond Hall to be either bored with the attentions of its owner or talked to by his mother, who seemed to believe that if Lillian would marry her son she would produce a complete transformation in him.

That a decided change in him was desirable even his fond mother was ready to admit, and she clung to the hope that Lillian would yet work it.

When the colonel had said he would come to the Hall on the following Tuesday Raymond took it for granted that the others would come likewise, and soon after this he went away.

"Who is Mr. Lancaster, of whom Mr. Raymond

was speaking to day!" asked Rose of Philip the evening of the same day.

"He is a friend of ours."

"Is he engaged to be married to your sister?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Raymond wants to marry her, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" with a long-drawn sigh. "How nice to be Lillian!"

"How! Do you think it would be nice to have a mountain of coarse selfishness like Raymond in love with you?"

"Oh no! but it must be nice to have lots of people's wanting you to marry them, mustn't it, now?"

"I don't know. Shall I tell you of someone who, I think, wants to marry you?" and he clasped his arm round her waist.

But she slipped from his embrace like an eel, for her quick ear had caught the sound of the slow, heavy tread of the colonel, and the next instant she was by his side, talking to him while she hung on his arm, and looked up into his face as though her every hope and thought in life was centred in him.

CHAPTER III.

THE visit to Raymond Hall has been paid, and Lillian breathed a sigh of intense thankfulness when they return to Hazelwode, and she finds a letter awaiting her.

She thrusts it inside the bosom of her dress, and as soon as she can do so she slips away to her own room to read the precious epistle.

What a day this has been to her!

Dreaming of this letter, hoping for this letter, she has had to listen to Edgar Raymond's jokes, which were not always too refined, and to console with his mother on many subjects, even though she could not consent to the all-powerful remedy.

For Lillian there was nothing new at the Hall save the dancing deer, which on this occasion refused to dance, but growled and tried to spring at his visitors instead, until the feminine portion of the party became very genuinely afraid of the vicious creature.

Lillian had seen the mansion and its contents many times, therefore she had very little interest in it; but the sight of the fine old Hall had a very marked effect upon Rose Langley.

To be mistress of such a place as this was what she had longed for and dreamed of, and though, when she looked at Edgar, she could not but feel that he was a serious drawback to the prospect of enjoyment, still she felt that it might even be possible to put up with him as a husband, provided Raymond Hall was her home.

That she could win him she had but very little doubt, even though he was so infatuated with Lillian; and Miss Rose was now trying to make up that variable quantity she called her mind to decide that this should be her purpose.

"I shall marry Raymond or Colonel Northbrook," she mused, as she arranged her yellow curls the next morning before the glass, "and I don't make up my mind which I'll have. The colonel is the handsomer of the two and the nicer by far; but then he is old, and I don't believe he is half as rich as Mr. Raymond. I wonder which Lillian would least approve of. I should like to mortify her if I could do so safely. She gives herself such grand airs, and takes such high moral ground on every conceivable subject, that she makes me feel small in spite of myself. Yes, I should like to take the conceit out of her a bit."

It was in this frame of mind that she went down to breakfast and found Lillian radiant, the colonel placidly amiable and self-contented, and Philip with a frown on his face that looked like a thunder-cloud.

Rose seemed to take no notice of what was going on, but chatted away like a magpie, asking the most direct questions about places and persons, and sometimes startling Lillian out of the intoxicating happiness that filled her heart.

"Then Mr. Raymond is really the richest man about here!" she asked, as she helped herself to a second egg.

"Yes! I suppose he is!" replied her host.

"What is his income?"

"I never asked him myself; do you very much wish to know?" with a smile.

"Oh, no! I was only wondering; but what are we going to do to-day? I should like to go for a ride."

"Very well, do so! Philip and Lillian will no doubt go with you!"

"I am not going out this morning!" said Lillian, quietly. "I have many things to attend to!"

Rose pouted.

She loved to tyrannise and to make the convenience of others yield to her own whims, and she now said in a coaxing, though half fretful tone,—

"Oh! you might go for a ride with me, Lily! I shan't be here long!"

"No! I cannot go this morning," was the decided reply; "but Philip will go with you, won't you?" to her brother.

"Of course I will!" was the ready answer.

"Where shall we go, Rose?"

"I don't know!" was the discontented response.

"I want Lily and your father to go too!"

And she looked appealingly to the colonel. She had succeeded in getting him to accept the invitation to Raymond Hall, avowed as Lillian was to it, and she now thought to exercise her power again with the same result as before.

"Yes! I'll go with you if you wish!" said her host, reluctantly.

He was not very fond of riding, and he had this morning received a batch of new magazines, which he was very anxious to dip into.

But he could not resist the pleading, pretty face, and he consoled himself with the thought that the magazines would keep.

"And, Lily! now your father is coming you'll come too, won't you?" and Rose Langley so far forgot herself as to allow the triumph she felt to shine in her eyes.

Lillian met the glance for a second, and only dimly read its meaning, but she replied coldly, and not without some surprise,—

"No! Miss Langley, I have no inclination for riding this morning."

Rose bit her lip and went on with her breakfast; getting her own way with everybody was not such a very easy matter after all.

As soon as breakfast was over the horses were ordered and the trio started—Rose looking very coquettish in her low-crowned hat, with a bright red wing in it, and her tightly-fitting habit.

It was almost time for luncheon when they returned, and found Lillian in the garden with Wilfred Lancaster walking by her side.

There was no need to ask why she had declined to ride, nor why she looked so bright and happy; and Rose wondered at the change she saw in her young hostess, and asked herself if being in love could make such a marvellous improvement in herself.

But when she looked at Wilfred she felt that he was a man fitted to win a woman's heart, and she became silent and thoughtful.

She had envied Lillian her proud, calm, and queenly beauty, and the quiet, self-contained dignity, that was so unlike her own effusive, restless self-consciousness; but now she felt that, above all, she envied her the man whose love she had won.

Wilfred himself took no more notice of Rose than common politeness necessitated. He was glad to get back to Lillian to tell her of his hopes and fears, and to sun himself in the sunshine of her smiles while she gave him her love and sympathy.

But Rose could not be quiet for any length of time, and her incessant craving for admiration made her try to win more than a passing tribute from Wilfred.

In this, however, she quite failed, for Wilfred was blind to her charms. She was a type of woman that he did not like, and that nothing could have induced him to admire.

The young man stayed to luncheon, and

loitered about for the best part of the afternoon—when he went away seeming to take all the sunshine of the day with him.

Very slowly the rest of the hours dragged along, for Colonel Northbrook and his son were to dine at the Rectory this evening—the rector, being a bachelor, had no ladies among his guests.

Lillian sat placidly sewing; her heart was full of happiness; and she needed no external circumstances to amuse or interest her.

But Rose was excited and restless.

She could settle herself to nothing.

For a few minutes she would be at the piano, playing wildly and recklessly; then she threw herself upon a couch, took up a novel, and tried to read.

Of this also she soon grew tired; and finding that Lillian was too much absorbed in her own thoughts and her own work to trouble herself at all about her sauntered off to her room.

"I can't imagine what has come over me," she exclaimed fretfully as she stood by the open window and looked out upon the trees and fields on which the grey shades of evening were falling. "I feel as though I had quicksilver in my veins; I must go out for a long walk. I suppose it's of no use asking Lillian to go with me."

She was silent for a few minutes, then she uttered a low mocking laugh as she said,—

"No, she is much too proper to go without a servant at our heels, or her father or brother to protect us. But I mean to have a run for all that, so I shall go alone."

In pursuance of this determination she put on a long, dark-coloured ulster, took the red wing out of her low-crowned riding hat, thus divesting herself of every bit of colour; then she tied on a lace veil that, though it completely hid her features, did not cover her bright, golden hair.

"Now the colonel himself wouldn't recognise me," she thought, complacently, when she had finished dressing; "and I mean to go and have a look at the house the Lancasters live in. I know where it is, but I never took an interest in it before to-day."

She knew the ways of Hazelwode by this time, and thus could let herself out by one of the windows on the ground-floor, and crossing a very narrow bit of shrubbery could make her way into a plantation, from whence she could get out into the high road.

She had no fear of being recognised, and even if she had met her host or his son she would not have cared, for she could readily make some pretty excuse for her erratic conduct; and they, she felt sure, would believe anything she told them.

But she only met a few rustics, one of whom, who looked like a farmer, as he passed, said,—

"Good night, Milly!"

"Good-night!" she responded, for she realized, intuitively, the mistake he had made.

She had been told she was very like Milly Dartwell, the belle of Witheram, and it was certain this man at least had mistaken her for that young person.

Certain of having concealed her own identity Rose became a little reckless, and walked along jauntily, until she reached the village, when she stood before the window of the large shop in which drapery, grocery, cheese, butter, and various articles too numerous to mention were all exhibited for sale.

"I think I'll buy something in case I find myself in want of an excuse!" she thought.

Then she went into the shop, and asked for a yard of white tulle.

The assistant at the drapery counter was a stranger to the place, and as yet knew very few of his master's customers. But he was very anxious to do as much business as possible, and he brought out laces and ribbons wherewith to tempt her while she sat listening to the conversation of a couple of women, who were hidden from her view by a pile of coloured flannels, and similar goods that stood in the middle of the shop, and divided the provision from the clothing department.

"You take my word for it, Milly Dartwell won't come to no good; she's got too many

strings to her bow, she have," said the first woman.

"Low, now, I never heard she was keeping company with nobody!" responded her companion.

"No, I dare say not; that would be straight enough, but she goes to meet a man in a velvet coat that paints pictures. He don't come home like to her mother's house, but meets her on the sands, and by the cliffs, and that's not the only one!"

"Law! you don't say so!"

"I do say it, though. She's been trapesing about with Mr. Lancaster, and with Squire Raymond, and two or three others like 'em, and if she don't come to grief well my name ain't Martha Jukes!"

But Rose could not stay to hear any more, and as she walked out of the shop she heard one of the women exclaim in a tone of dismay,—

"Law, Mrs. Jukes, there she is!"

"I seem to bear a strong resemblance to a very disreputable young person!" thought Rose, as she walked along. "I wonder if she is really as bad as they make her out to be!"

A short walk brought her outside Rock Cottage, in which the Lancasters lived.

Night had set in by this time, and the lamp in the small drawing room had been lighted, though the blind had been only partially drawn, and standing outside the low garden wall she could see the occupants of the room distinctly.

Mrs. Lancaster sat facing the window while her son was opposite her, his handsome profile reflected upon the blind.

The mother still retained much of her youthful beauty; but she was proud-looking, and even stern, and she seemed to be talking very earnestly as she took some papers out of a small box that stood on the table, and opening them, handed them to her son.

"I wish I knew what they are talking about," thought Rose. "I could almost believe that she is telling him something about his family that he never knew before. She looks like a woman who had once occupied a good position in the world, and he is certainly the handsomest man I ever saw."

Thus she mused while the conversation of which she could not hear a word was being carried on between mother and son.

"I am glad I did not know this before," he said, as he refolded the papers and handed them back to his mother. "If I had thought there was any possibility of my getting anything that was not won by my own exertions I fear I should not have worked as I have done, but in seeking for the shadow should have lost the substance; and, after all, it is but a chance."

"Merely a chance!" acquiesced his mother, "and I believe that what has happened has all been for the best. Your father's uncle may not have been as rich as was reported, or he may have given his money away or left it to strangers. The chances were so small that I thought it best to ignore them altogether. If I tried to discover your father's relatives I should not have been able to educate you, and my reason for coming to live in this place was that you might be able to attend Bentham's grammar school, which I had heard was one of the most famous in England. My means were so narrow that I could not spare any money for inquiries."

"I can quite understand that," he replied, with a smile; "but if ever I have any money to spend I will try to hunt up some of my father's relations; and now I think I'll take a stroll and smoke a cigar. I feel restless after what you have told me."

"Yes, I feared it would have that effect, and it was my principal reason for not speaking on the subject until your examinations were over."

"I only want to familiarise my mind with the idea; I shan't be long."

And so saying he kissed his mother on the forehead, and a few minutes afterwards he walked out of the house.

He did not see the shrinking figure by the wall, but made direct for the shore, Rose silently following him.

They had proceeded in this manner a short distance, the girl well in the rear, and they were

descending a steep pathway leading to the sands, when Rose thought she heard a singular sound that the boom of the breaking waves on the shingle could not drown.

It was the clank of a chain.

The sound seemed to come from one side of the cliffs that at this part were covered with stunted trees and low underwood, and sloped down to the steep, rugged path that led to the beach.

Rose stood still and listened.

The sound was repeated; it seemed to be coming near, and now she could see, scarcely thirty yards off, two small fiery eyes.

In an instant the horrible truth flashed upon her mind, and with a wild shriek,—

"The bear! the bear!" she turned and fled.

CHAPTER IV.

TERROR lent witness to Rose Langley's feet, and in an incredibly short space of time she reached Hazlewood, entered by the glass door which she had left open—though she took good care to close it now—and stole quickly, though noiselessly, up to her own room.

Everything was as she had left it; no one had been in the room since she went out of it; and now rapidly but methodically she divested herself of her ulster, folded it up, and replaced it in the trunk where until this night it had lain since she came from London.

Her next step was to replace the scarlet wing in her riding-hat, to put away her gloves and veil, and then she stood before the looking-glass pale and panting, her heart beating wildly, and all the doll-like prettiness gone from her face.

"How white I am!" she thought, "and how my heart beats! What an awful thing it must be to live in countries where wild animals wander about at night! I wonder if that dreadful bear has done any mischief to anybody? I ought to give an alarm, I know; but if I do I shall betray myself, and everybody will be wondering why I was in such a place alone and at such a time! Besides, somebody else is sure to meet the creature! Perhaps it is caught by this time. Mr. Lancaster, I know, must have heard my shriek! No, I will be silent; unless I am obliged to speak I will say nothing!"

Having come to this decision she threw herself on a couch at the foot of the bed, and, fearing to trust herself in the company of others lest she should betray her agitation, she closed her eyes as though she were asleep.

She had not taken this precaution a minute too soon, for almost immediately afterwards Lillian Northbrook tapped at the door and came into the room.

"Oh, here you are!" she said, as Rose opened her eyes. "I was wondering what had become of you. Aren't you well?"

"No; my head aches," was the reply.

"Can I get you anything to relieve it?"

"No, thank you. I dare say I shall be better in the morning; and I think I'll go to bed."

"Papa and Philip have just returned from the Rectory," said Lillian; "but I suppose you won't care to see them to-night?"

"No, I'll go to bed, if you will excuse me. I have no doubt I shall be all right to-morrow!"

Then Lillian went away, and Rose was left alone.

As she had predicted, she was quite well in the morning, though she was rather inclined to be nervous, and started, and turned pale at the sudden opening of a door, or at any sound that for the moment seemed unfamiliar.

But nothing unusual occurred; though she observed that Philip Northbrook more than once looked at his sister mournfully when he thought he was not observed. Later in the morning Wilfred Lancaster called.

"I am going away for a few days," he said, with an effort to speak carelessly.

"Going to London again?" asked the colonel, struck by the young man's manner.

"No. I am going into Lancashire, in the first place," was the evasive answer.

Then, as he was taking leave, he told Lillian

that he was going to seek out some of his father's relations.

She pressed his hand. She had absolute and unquestioning faith in him, and she believed that whatever he did was intended for her benefit as well as for his own.

The day after this Mr. Raymond came over to see them.

There was so much lurking malice in his face that Rose asked curiously,—

"How is your bear behaving himself, Mr. Raymond?"

"Oh! I've got rid of him!" was the briefest reply.

"Got rid of him! Did you sell him?"

"I didn't make much by the transaction," he laughed, awkwardly, evading a direct reply to her question, "but he was too kindly treated in my place; he was getting sancy and vicious, and I was afraid some accident might happen, so I got rid of him."

"I think it is a horrid thing to have wild, vicious animals for pets!" said Rose, with a shiver. "I have heard of people keeping young lions and tigers just as we have cats and dogs, but something dreadful has always happened in consequence!"

"That is because you always hear the dreadful stories," returned the young squire, disparagingly "the cases in which the creatures don't break loose or misbehave themselves are never reported."

"That may be true!" interposed the colonel, "but I confess I should not like to meet your pet bear unchained unless I had my rifle in my hand."

"No; probably not!" said the young man, drily.

Then, turning to Lillian, he remarked,—

"I suppose you have heard about Milly Dartwell?"

"No; what should I hear about her?" was the haughty reply.

Edgar Raymond shrugged his shoulders as he responded,—

"I thought you might have heard that she is missing, and it is supposed that she has met with foul play."

"What do you mean? Do you imply that she has been murdered?" asked Philip, excitedly.

"That is the supposition; but you'll hear all about it in the village. I can't give you any details."

He said this with such a significant glance at Lillian that she rose from her seat and walked out of the room.

She disliked Raymond personally, and his gossip and evil speaking were intolerable to her. Not for a moment did she doubt that he would be spiteful enough to suggest that Wilfred was in some way connected with Milly Dartwell's disappearance, but that there was not a particle of evidence to inculpate him she was quite convinced.

She did not return to the drawing room until she saw her father and Raymond leave the house and walk in the direction of the village.

Her brother was speaking as she entered, and he was not, for the moment, aware of her presence.

"I don't know what to do," he was saying, "for I saw something the night before last that will help to make things look black for Lancaster."

"What was it?" asked Rose.

"Well, I know I can trust you," he replied, "and you shall decide whether I ought to speak or not."

"When father and I left the Rectory Dr. Prout was with us, and he and the governor stood talking together till I grew impatient, and walked on to Rock Cottage, thinking I'd have a smoke with Lancaster."

"Just as I got near his house, however, I saw him come out, with a cigar in his mouth, and walk towards the part of the shore where the marks of a struggle have since been found."

"I was on the point of joining him, when I saw Milly Dartwell between him and me, evidently bent on following him. It looked so like an

appointment that I stood still, not knowing what to do.

"Then I turned back, and joined my father, who was just leaving the doctor. Now, what am I to do?"

"Tell the truth, and keep back nothing!" said his sister, coming forward. "Wilfred will be able to explain everything when he hears of what he is accused; and surely you, Philip, do not doubt him?"

"No, of course I don't; still I do wish I hadn't seen Milly following him; and now it's unfortunate again that he has gone away in a hurry—just, too, when his being on the spot might stop malicious tongues from wagging. There's the governor half believes the story against him already!"

"Papa always was prejudiced against Wilfred," said Lillian, scornfully; "but if he thinks that anything he can say or do will make me change he is mistaken!"

Rose sat silent.

She felt a guilty consciousness that this was the time for her to speak, and to avow that it was she, and not Milly Dartwell, who was waiting outside Rock Cottage, and had followed Wilfred.

But to do so under present circumstances was more than difficult—it was well-nigh impossible!

How could she account for the mad freak that had made her partially disguise herself, and go roaming about alone?

It is true she might have pleaded that she was not disguised any more than she would have been in walking through the streets of London, and she could likewise have urged that her wearing this style of dress at the moment was purely accidental; still the fact remained that she had been accosted as Milly Dartwell, and that she had carried on the deception.

"They can't hang him unless the girl's body is found," she reasoned; "and if it is found, and the bear killed her, then the manner of her death will be clear enough, for the brute can't have eaten the whole of her!"

Then she shuddered as she remembered how very near she had herself been to making a supper for Bruin; and she resolved that never again would she go wandering about alone, unless she had much better reasons for doing so than she had on the recent occasion.

It was strange, she thought, that she had heard nothing about the bear being at large, and that Mr. Raymond should speak so vaguely of having got rid of it. Surely he dared not do this if the animal were not dead or in safe custody!

Still, she argued, there was no reason why she should implicate herself in this very unpleasant business; and so she sat silent, trying to look sympathetic, and wondering whether or not she had better remain where she was or return to London.

Just before dinner-time Colonel Northbrook came home, looking pale and stern. He had evidently heard a very dark story, and he had taken the worst possible view of the matter.

He ate his dinner in silence, but when the meal was over he requested his daughter to come with him to his study.

Lillian obeyed, nerving herself, meanwhile, to meet the impending blow.

It came with more crushing weight than she anticipated.

"Sit down, my dear," said her father, handing her to a chair. "I don't mean to make any comment upon what has happened, but merely to tell you what I have learnt."

She bent her head.

Reproaches and commands she could have resisted, but this painful calmness, this proposed statement of facts struck a cold chill to her heart.

"It seems to have been known to several persons that Millicent Dartwell was in the habit of meeting some man near Bryant's Gap, which, as you know, leads to the shore. There are several stories afloat as to who this man really was—some describing him as being a stranger in the neighbourhood, and wearing a velvet hat

but one or two are most positive that this clandestine lover was Wilfred Lancaster."

Lillian lifted her hand as though she would speak, but her father said, firmly,—

"Hear me to the end!"

She bent her head; to listen in silence seemed like treachery to her absent lover.

"One thing is proved beyond doubt," continued the colonel; "Lancaster did meet her at this place more than once. Raymond met them on one occasion, and spoke to them, and there is ample proof that both he and she were in Bryant's Gap the night before that."

"And if they were what does that prove?" asked the girl, with flashing eyes.

"I am afraid that it will go a long way towards proving that he murdered her, dragged her body down to the water's edge when the tide was going out, and left it to be carried away by the waves."

"But what proof is there of this? Did anybody see it done?"

"Certainly not; who could stand by and witness such a crime? A handkerchief with Lancaster's name upon it was found half-way down the gap, where there had evidently been a terrible struggle, and there were likewise marks of blood, while, but a short distance off, were certain things which the girl was known to have had in her possession that same evening. Add to this that she has been missing from her home ever since, and the chain of evidence is fatally complete."

"Fatally indeed!" moaned Lillian, "and yet I believe in Wilfred's innocence as implicitly as I believe in my own."

"Your faith is not shared by many," said Colonel Northbrook; "and I have had to take part in the unpleasant duty of signing a warrant for his arrest."

But Lillian heard no more.

Feeling and consciousness mercifully deserted her, and she fell senseless at her father's feet.

CHAPTER V.

MR. HORACE BROWN sat in his favourite room in his detached villa at Richmond.

The open glass doors led out upon a lawn ornamented on each side by high banks of flowers, hollyhocks, sweet peas, poppies, and roses, all growing side by side in the wildest beauty; while at the further end of the lawn fruit trees had been trained to act as a low screen between this and the kitchen garden beyond.

A very comfortable looking man was Mr. Horace Brown—a man of some seventy years of age—with long white hair and a shrewd, florid countenance that was not unkindly in its expression.

He was a retired solicitor, enjoying the fruits of a fairly honourable career.

There was nothing interesting in the morning paper, and he was just laying it down when a servant entered with a card upon which was the name,—

"Mr. Wilfred Lancaster."

A nod, which the woman understood, and a minute later our hero came into the room.

Mr. Brown received him politely, and requested him to be seated.

"I must apologise for intruding upon you," said the young man, "but I believe you and your father acted as solicitors for my family for a great number of years."

"Your name is Lancaster," remarked the elder man, referring to the card. "The name is not an uncommon one."

"I am the sole surviving representative of the Lancasters, who formerly possessed Holcombe-by-Leigh," said Wilfred.

The lawyer shook his head as he replied,—

"Pardon me, that statement is not correct, for I at the present moment know another member of that family."

"At any rate, I am the representative of the elder branch," said our hero, proudly, "and I am only too glad to hear from you that I have some relatives living. It was to ask if you

could give me any information about my great uncle, Merton Lancaster, that I came here this morning."

"He is dead!"

"So I suppose. He went out to India when my father was very little more than a child, and fabulous reports came of his wealth and his influence at the court of the Begum of—". There was some foundation for them, I presume!"

"Yes, I suppose there was," replied the lawyer, cautiously; "but when the Begum died he married an English lady, and left a son."

"Then that is the other member of the family of whom you spoke. Will you give me his address?"

"No, I cannot do that without his permission," was the slowly uttered response. "I suppose you thought a fortune was waiting for your acceptance, Mr. Lancaster!"

"I hoped something of the kind might be the case," with a smile; "for I knew nothing of my great uncle's marriage. But apart from any thought of pecuniary advantage I should like to know my cousin. Is he married?"

"Not to my knowledge," was the answer.

"Are you married?"

"Not yet, but I hope soon to be."

"Ah! If it is not a secret, may I ask to whom?"

"The only daughter of Colonel Northbrook, of Heselwode."

"Ah! yes; I know the name. And with regard to your position, Mr. Lancaster; do you wish to volunteer any information on the subject that you would like conveyed to your cousin? I warn you that he is a very peculiar man, and as likely as not will refuse to acknowledge you!"

"I don't want his acknowledgment," replied Wilfred proudly. "If my great grandfather had left one inch of entailed land behind him it must have come to me. My cousin may be a rich man, but I am the head of the family."

He rose to his feet as he spoke.

The pride of birth is often more satisfactory to a man than the pride of wealth; for it is what no power can give him, and of which none may rob him.

The lawyer looked strangely at him, and asked him many questions about his mother, and where he had spent the early years of his life, and why he had not sought his relatives before—all of which he answered frankly, admitting that his mother had only told him, a few days previously, that there might be a possibility of recovering some of his father's family property.

They were still talking when an imperious knock at the front door rang through the house, and a few seconds later the woman servant came hurriedly into the room with a startled expression of countenance, and, addressing her master, said,—

"Please, sir, there's a policeman wants Mr. Lancaster; he says he saw him come into the house!"

There was no time to bid her admit the constable, for a couple of men had followed on her heels, and now came into the room.

"Wilfred Lancaster," said one of them; "I arrest you for the murder of Millicent Dartwell at Withernam. Please remember that whatever you say will be taken down, and may be used as evidence against you."

"Murder!" exclaimed the young man, feeling as though he were under the influence of a nightmare. "I have not seen Milly Dartwell for more than a fortnight, and I know nothing of the girl; the accusation is preposterous."

"There is my warrant, sir, and I should like to spare you as much annoyance as possible, if you will give your word that you will go quietly with us."

"Of course I will," was the reply, while his pale face flushed. "I would never have left home if I had known I was suspected of such a crime. I am ready."

Then turning to the lawyer he said,—

"I am sorry to have brought this annoyance upon you, sir; but when I came here I was as

ignorant of such a charge being made against me as you were yourself."

"Yes, I believe it, I quite believe it," was the answer; "it's a most extraordinary affair. I hope you'll get through it all right. Good-morning; good-morning."

And it was quite evident that he was glad when the officers of justice with their prisoner were well out of the house.

What a horrible journey that was to Wilfred Lancaster! He passed hours of mental agony never to be forgotten, and all the time he had the consciousness that everybody who looked at him and his companions knew that he was their prisoner.

If he could have fainted he would have been thankful, but so far was he from this that his senses were most keenly alive to every word or glance of the most casual passer-by.

But the journey came to an end at last, and he was conveyed to the small police-station at Witherham.

It was late in the evening when he arrived, and the constable's wife made him up a comfortable bed, upon which, despite his agony of mind, he slept soundly.

Indeed, he felt that the worst of this matter must now be over, for no chain of circumstantial evidence that had ever been forged could convict him of such an awful crime.

The next morning he was brought up before the magistrates to be examined, and to hear the details of the charge against him.

First of all came Mrs. Dartwell, who said that her daughter had gone out directly after tea on the day in question, and had never returned.

She wore a brown ulster, a low crowned felt hat, and a short veil. The witness was positive about her daughter's dress, because she expostulated with her for wearing her new ulster so often.

On being cross-examined she admitted that her daughter had many admirers, and that she believed the prisoner was one of them, though she had never seen them together. She admitted also that she had been told that her daughter was in the habit of meeting some strange gentleman in Bryant's Gap, but she did not believe it.

Other witnesses were called who had seen Milly Dartwell meet a gentleman in Bryant's Gap, but they would not swear it was the prisoner.

One witness was the young shopman who had sold the tulle and lace and ribbon that was found torn and bloodstained in the Gap. He described his customer and identified the articles; and the two women who were in the shop at the same time swore positively to the identity of the young person in question with the missing girl.

Next came Philip Northbrook.

He was an unwilling witness, and he made no more of his evidence than he could help; but it was elicited that he saw Lancaster go in the direction of Bryant's Gap on the night in question, and that he watched a girl follow him, who, he had no doubt at the time, was Milly Dartwell.

Then followed the evidence of a coastguard's man.

He deposed that about twelve o'clock at night he had heard the sound of a gun, but as he did not see the flash he could not positively determine the spot from whence it came.

At about five in the morning, on looking down Bryant's Gap, his attention was attracted to some feminine finery, such as laces and ribbons, that were scattered on the ground.

On going to examine them he found they were torn and blood-stained. Lower down he came upon a pool of blood, and near it the handkerchief produced, with the prisoner's name upon it.

He also found marks of a struggle, while some heavy body seemed to have been dragged down to the water's edge.

The tide was going out at twelve o'clock, and anything thrown off the low rocks into the water at the time would be pretty sure to be carried out to sea.

This was substantially the case for the prosecution, and the local solicitor, who had hastily been engaged by Mrs. Lancaster to defend her son, very forcibly declared that the whole charge rested upon nothing more substantial than the vaguest suspicion.

The only evidence against his client, he contended, was the pocket-handkerchief he had lost, and surely a man was not to be convicted of murder on such a flimsy pretext!

It was said that the accused had run away to evade detection, but this could be proved to be false. He had left his house on business, and would have returned to it this very day if he had been left at liberty.

He stigmatised the accusation as the most flimsily supported one that had ever been made against a man, and he asked that the prisoner should be at once discharged.

But his eloquence was of no avail.

The prisoner was remanded for a week, bail being refused.

"I don't believe Milly is dead!" exclaimed Lillian, when she heard from Philip what had passed at the examination.

"Neither do I," joined in Rose, eagerly, "I shouldn't be surprised if Milly was never near Bryant's Gap that night."

"But I saw her go!" expostulated Philip.

"Did you see her face?"

"No, but I could not be mistaken in her; nobody about her dresses as she does."

"That is absurd! I can dress up in half-a-dozen different ways. The idea of saying you recognized a woman when you didn't see her face!"

"I saw a woman, at any rate," returned Philip, "and if it was not Milly, and she wasn't killed, she'll be sure to turn up. No woman with any conscience would hesitate a moment when the life of an innocent man is at stake."

Rose was silenced.

To speak now was a much more difficult matter than it would have been several days ago when the accusation against Wilfred Lancaster was first made, and she felt that the time had gone by when she could attribute her conduct to a girlish frolic.

So she remained silent, and another week went by.

A week of agony, of alternate hope and fear; but in this interval nothing more definite had been discovered, and when questioned and cross-questioned by the barrister who had been engaged for the defence many of the witnesses wavered, and at length admitted that as they had not seen Milly's face on the night in question they might be mistaken, though they felt quite sure as to her identity.

But the unfortunate girl's body had not been found, and without stronger evidence it was urged that the accused ought no longer to be kept in custody.

The bench was obstinate, however, and Wilfred Lancaster was again remanded for a week.

"I don't feel as though I cared what happens to me," the young man said, despondingly, as Lillian and his mother tried to console him after this second remand. "I was so full of hope for the future before this blow came! and now I shall be a tainted man for the rest of my life, be it a long or short one. You had best say goodbye to me, Lillian, and try to forget me!"

"I shall never forget you, Wilfred, and I will never give you up as long as I live!" replied the girl fervently. "If either of us fail in the promise we made to each other it will be you. I shall never change!"

He pressed her white hand to his lips. Then he said—

"Your devotion is pure and unselfish, my darling, but I ought not to take advantage of it! I have no fear for my life in this matter, but my prospects are permanently blighted! My obtaining an appointment in India is now more than doubtful, and I shall always be pointed at as the man against whom a charge of murder was made!"

"Don't take such a gloomy view of the future, my son!" said his mother, gently, "but try to believe that whatever happens to you is for the best! It is a hard lesson to learn, but I have

always found that the darkest cloud had a silver lining!"

He smiled sadly. He had no desire to add to their depression by speaking of his own forebodings, but he, for his own part, felt like a man stricken with some fatal malady, from which recovery was impossible.

Soon after this they left him, and then, woman like, they tried to soothe and cheer each other, though both of them realized with bitter certainty that, whatever else happened, social ruin was inevitable.

When Lillian reached her home she found her father looking very stern and angry.

"I hoped you would have had the good taste to remain at home, and not have publicly identified yourself with a man to whom such a serious crime is imputed," he said severely; "but since you have shown so little consideration for yourself and for me, I must insist that you will hold no further communication with him!"

"Don't lay such a command upon me, papa," she replied, quietly, "because I shall not obey it. So long as I live I shall be true to Wilfred, and whenever he asks me to marry him I will do so! If, after saying this, you wish me to leave your house, I will do so!"

"And where will you go?" he demanded, frightened by her dreary calmness.

"To his mother," was the reply. "She will receive me as a daughter."

Colonel Northbrook bit his lip savagely. He knew his daughter well enough to be sure that she would keep her word; and, besides wishing to avoid a scandal, he had another reason for desiring that she should not leave his house at the present time.

Rose Langley had promised to marry him, but had begged that the engagement should remain secret for the present, and, under the circumstances, if Lillian left the house, Rose also must go.

So, now he said, angrily,—

"I should think Mrs. Lancaster has burden enough on her without having to take care of you, and for decency's sake it is well that you should remain at home for the present."

Then he left her, and she, almost heart-broken, went to her own room.

She threw herself on her knees beside the bed, and prayed long and earnestly for the welfare of the man she loved—prayed as she had never prayed before; and as she rose to her feet a verse of a hymn that she had often sung came to her mind,—

"O, Lord! how happy should we be
If we could cast our care on Thee,
If we from self could rest;
And feel in heart that One above
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best!"

For the best, yes, that was what his mother said; "it might be for the best." Why could she not have faith! why was her heart so full of doubt! She would believe, come what would, she was resolved, she would believe that all was for the best.

The very struggle that this state of feeling necessitated gave her a certain amount of strength; and instead of shutting herself up in her own room she bathed her face, changed her dress, and went down to dinner as usual; but there was a calm and lofty expression on her countenance that was unusual to it. It was not the dejection of grief, nor the eagerness of hope, but a certain noble contentment that lifted her above the carking cares and petty aims of ordinary life.

Her companions looked at her with surprise, and one of them with envy.

"She could never look like that if she knew what it was to be so mean and to feel such self-contempt as I feel," thought Rose Langley, bitterly. "If I had only possessed the moral courage to speak at the right time no one would have blamed me; but now it is too late—too late!"

Over and over again, through the sleepless night that followed, the wretched girl repeated those words—"Too late!"

And the woman upon whose head all the grief and misery seemed to rest slept sweetly and peace-

fully, waking once or twice to repeat, as though it were a promise of happiness,—

"And feel at heart that One above,
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best."

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning, after attending to her household duties, Lillian walked over to Rock Cottage to see Mrs. Lancaster.

She found the widow calm, and even cheerful. She was quite sure that all would come right, that everything would turn out for the best; and even as she spoke a fly drove up to the garden-gate, and a man not much past the prime of life alighted from it.

His face was pale and sunken, his shoulders were narrow, his tall form stooped, and he had about him the air of a confirmed invalid—the expression of one who is out-of-sorts with the world, and who regards even the brightest picture with a jaundiced eye.

He leaned on the arm of a servant as he came up the pathway to the door; and when the maid opened it, and, in answer to his inquiry, said her mistress was at home and asked his name, he gave her a card upon which was engraved "Wilfred Merton Lancaster."

A few minutes later he was seated in the presence of the two ladies.

"I saw a report of this unhappy business in the newspapers," he was saying, gravely; "and I likewise received a letter from my former solicitor, Mr. Brown, describing your son's visit to him, and the unpleasant way in which it was interrupted. I suppose you can prove that your son is really what he stated himself to be?"

"Oh, yes! I have all the papers necessary," was the reply.

"And why did you bury yourself and your child in this obscure corner of the world, madam? Do you know that you and your son were both supposed to be dead?"

"No! I did not know that there was anybody living who would ask the question whether we were alive or dead," said Mrs. Lancaster, slightly annoyed at the tone of her questioner; "but the reason why I came here to reside is plain enough. I had very little more than a hundred a-year to live upon, and my boy had to be educated. Bentham Grammar School is famous, and the fees are small. It was the best thing to be obtained with my narrow means, and Wilfred has more than fulfilled my hopes, and justified the sacrifices I have made for him."

"Humph! And about this other business. I suppose you hadn't money to obtain good legal assistance for him?"

"I don't think money would have helped Wilfred," interposed Lillian. "My father is very much prejudiced against him; and Mr. Raymond, who is likewise a magistrate, is most bitter in his animosity. From what my brother told me this morning I believe the case would have been dismissed yesterday if it had not been for them."

"Humph! They're some reason for their animosity, I suppose!"

"They think they have!" was the reply, while her face flushed painfully.

"Humph! We must see what we can do between us to outflank the enemy. By-the-way, madam, I am afraid I shall have to hand over a small estate which I have had for some years to your son. I can't say that I shall do it with pleasure, because it wouldn't be true if I did; but it would have been your husband's property if he had been alive, so of course it must go to his son."

"Oh, this is good news, indeed! The property did not belong to your father, did it?"

"No, it should have come to my grandfather—your boy's great grandfather. Believing myself the sole representative of the family I expended a great deal of money in making out my claim to it, and this is what I get for my pains, after all. I must hand it over to my cousin's son."

"At least you do it voluntarily," said Mrs. Lancaster, smiling; "if you had not told me we should have known nothing about the matter."

"You don't suppose I'd keep what doesn't belong to me, do you?" asked the visitor in an angry tone.

"I am sure you wouldn't."

"Still it's a nuisance for all that. However, the next step is to help your son out of his present scrape. Do you believe the girl really was murdered?"

"I do not!" said Lillian; "I believe she has eloped with somebody."

"Or been taken away against her will," suggested Mrs. Lancaster.

And then she repeated what Wilfred had told her about Milly claiming his protection the night before he went to London for his examination.

"Humph! That throws a new light on the matter. I'll have a detective down; and now I must look for quarters. I suppose there is an inn in the village?"

"Yes, a very good one."

Then he went away, leaving the two ladies to talk together over the good fortune of which he had told them.

That was a busy week for Mr. Lancaster—he had so much to do, and so many people to see that he quite forgot his ailments, and for the time, at least, ceased to be an invalid.

But with all his fussiness he really did very little towards bringing about the *dénouement* that actually occurred.

As no further evidence against our hero had been discovered even his enemies could not detain him in prison any longer; but just as the proceedings commenced a woman came into the room in an excited manner, pushed her way up to the table at which the magistrates sat, and throwing back her veil, exclaimed,—

"I'm not dead; I've never been injured. I went away of my own free will, and I'm married; I'm not Milly Dartwell any longer, but I'm not dead!"

Then, overcome with excitement, she became giddy, and would have fallen, if a gentlemanly looking man, who had closely followed her, had not caught her in his arms.

She was provided with a seat, and then the stranger who had come with her, addressing the chairman, said,—

"This lady is my wife. I took her away in my boat from Bryant's Gap on the evening of the day when she was believed to have been lost. I placed her in charge of some friends of mine, and we were married the next morning. We have been on the Continent since, and it was only yesterday that we heard of the charge of murder against this gentleman. We immediately set off to remove the suspicion of such a crime from him without an hour's delay."

If anyone had been looking at Edgar Raymond they would have observed that he turned very pale as he recognized Milly, and that more than once he glanced anxiously towards the door, as though he would like to make his escape if he could do so unobserved.

This was impossible, however, and he had to remain quiet while explanations were made, and Wilfred was formally released from custody, and congratulated and sympathized with by his many friends.

Colonel Northbrook was one of the first to shake hands with our hero, and tell him how glad he was that this painful matter had been satisfactorily cleared up, and to express the hope that they should see him as often as before at Hazelwode.

Of Lillian's intense joy and Mrs. Lancaster's happiness I need say little. Such contentment as now filled their hearts can only come after long anxiety and acute mental suffering.

Several days have elapsed since Wilfred regained his freedom, and during this time he and his cousin have got to know and like each other. The estate which is to be handed over to our hero is worth little more than a thousand a year, but it is quite enough to keep a man from going

out to India to spend the best part of his life under a tropical sun.

"I shall soon claim the fulfilment of your promise, Lillian," says the ardent lover as he walks by the side of the girl he loves under the stately elms at Hazelwode. "Your father has consented to our marriage without unnecessary delay."

The girl smiled; she was too happy to be coquettish, and she said, half sadly,—

"I am very sorry for Philip; he means to go abroad; he had made up his mind to marry Rose Langley, and she, it seems, is going to marry my father."

"Your father!" exclaimed Wilfred, in astonishment.

"Yes, my father; it was rather a shock to me yesterday when papa told me."

"I should think it was; she always reminds me unpleasantly of Milly Dartwell, though Milly behaved well in the end."

"Yes! but that matter is still an unexplained mystery. Who bought those ribbons and laces if Milly did not, and how is that pool of blood in Bryant's Gap to be accounted for? I shall never feel quite comfortable until the matter is cleared up—shall you, dearest?"

"Never," was the reply; "but it is a mystery, and I fear it is likely to remain one."

The question that puzzled and distressed Lillian Northbrook likewise puzzled a good many other people, and there was scarcely a man or a woman in the village who had not discussed the matter, and had not formed his or her own particular theory about it.

As for the young man in Mr. Searle's drapery and general shop, he had become quite an important personage from the number of customers who would only be served by him, so that they might hear once more how he had sold one yard of tulle, three yards of *à cru* lace, and two yards of blue ribbon, to the young person whom Mrs. Jukes declared to be Milly Dartwell.

Among the persons whose minds were greatly exercised upon this mystery was Phoebe Lake, who performed the composite duties of parlour-maid and lady's-maid at Hazelwode.

This young woman was a good hater, whether she was a good servant or not, and she had taken an intense and bitter dislike to Rose Langley.

"There's been twice the work in the house since that doll-faced hussey came here," Phoebe had declared to one of her fellow-servants; "and she orders me about as Miss Lillian would never think of doing. I'd give warning to leave if I thought she was going to be here long."

One evening, just before Mr. Searle's shop was going to close, Phoebe walked up to the new assistant and asked to see some stockings.

He was untying a packet when she produced a bill which had evidently come from this shop, and asked,—

"Did you ever see that before?"

He looked at it for a moment, then exclaimed eagerly,—

"Yes, I wrote it myself; it's the bill for the laces and ribbons that were found blood-stained in Bryant's Gap."

"You'll swear to it?"

"Of course, I will; I've got the entry here," and he produced his book; "besides, there's my name on it."

"Hush! don't talk so loud. You come up with me to Hazelwode; Colonel Northbrook wants to see you; don't say anything about it till you come back! Will it be long before you shut up?"

"No, I shall have done in a few minutes, but you needn't wait for me; tell the colonel I'll come."

Phoebe departed to prepare the colonel for the visitor whom he certainly had not sent for.

The prudent young man meanwhile told his employer what had happened, then set off to obey the summons.

The master of Hazelwode was seated in his study looking over papers, some of which he thought he might as well destroy before he took

unto himself a wife, when, after tapping at the door, Phoebe entered.

"Please, sir, can you spare a few minutes," she asked, in a tone that made her master look at her.

"Yes; what is it?" he asked, quickly.

"It's about the mystery of Bryant's Gap, sir; I've found out who it was that was mistaken for Milly Dartwell."

"Indeed! who was it?"

"May I call in the young man from Mr. Searle's, sir? He's in the hall."

"Yes, if it is necessary."

And the colonel pushed his papers from him. He felt, instinctively, that something unpleasant was going to be told him.

The young man came in, and was surprised to be questioned by the servant; but he repeated that the bill produced was the same he had given with the articles that were found blood-stained in Bryant's Gap.

"And where did you get this bill?" asked the colonel, looking sternly at Phoebe.

"From the pocket of Miss Langley's ulster, sir!"

"Miss Langley's ulster! I don't believe she has one!"

"I didn't know that she had one till yesterday, sir; but as I was folding up her things—she gives me heaps of trouble—I came upon a brown cloth ulster at the bottom of a box. I took it out to shake it so that the moth shouldn't get in, and this paper fell out of the pocket!"

"It is singular; but is that all you have to tell me?"

"No, sir; if you remember, you and Mr. Philip was dining at the Rectory that night."

"Well."

"Miss Langley wasn't in the drawing-room when tea was ready, and I went to her room to call her, and she wasn't there. But I saw on the bed the red wing that she wears in her riding hat. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but the next day it was in her hat again."

"And what do you infer from that?"

"Why, sir, this. The ulster and the hat without the feather was just the way the young person was dressed that went to Mr. Searle's shop. Shall I fetch the ulster and hat, sir?"

"No!" sternly. "I will talk to Miss Langley herself. Give this young man some supper, if he will have it."

But the young man declined.

He felt that he had been trapped by Phoebe, and he was resentful accordingly.

It was not until the following morning that Colonel Northbrook asked the girl who had promised to be his wife to come to the study with him.

She smilingly complied; but the smiles vanished from her face when he handed her a chair, and asked coldly—even sternly,—

"Now, were you at Bryant's Gap on the night when Milly Dartwell was believed to have been murdered there?"

She looked at him for a moment, then, seeing that the game was lost, she said boldly,—

"Yes, I was."

"And you never spoke of it, although you knew that the life of an innocent man might be imperilled by your silence?"

"I did not know that to begin with!" she asserted; "and afterwards I was so frightened I didn't know what to do."

"How could you be frightened?"

"I had gone out for a walk, because Lillian was stupid, and you were out; and when I got a little way down the Gap I met Mr. Raymond's bear. It was dragging its chain, and it was just a short distance off, but we saw each other, and I believed it was coming after me and would kill me. I almost flew back here, and I did not come downstairs again that night."

"This makes the case darker still," said the colonel sadly. "Raymond said he had got rid of his bear. Were you and he in collusion?"

"In collusion!" exclaimed Rose, furiously, "certainly not; we never spoke to each other on the subject. You are making a great fuss over a

very little. If you are going to behave like this when we are married, I—"

"We never shall be married," he interposed, sadly. "I could not trust my name and honour to a woman who is so utterly regardless of her duty towards other people as you have proved yourself to be. It will be well for both of us that we should never meet again."

"Very well! I am sorry I ever came here. I've been a fool for my pains all through."

Then with a face flushed with anger she left the room, and soon after walked out of the house without saying good-bye to anyone.

On her way to the village she met one of the gardeners, whose excited face told her that something unusual had occurred.

"What do 'ee think, Miss?" the man exclaimed. "Squire Raymond's bear has been washed ashore, and there's a bullet hole in his skull, and he's got his chain on him still."

"I have no doubt Mr. Raymond shot him in Bryant's Gap," she replied coldly.

Then she went on, while the man stood in the road staring after her.

The news that the body of his bear had been found reached Edgar Raymond that same morning; and fearing the remarks that would be made about his culpable silence, he found it convenient to have some urgent business which carried him up to London, and thence to the Continent.

Probably he hopes that the whole matter will be forgotten before he returns.

Soon after this Wilfred and Lillian were married. It was a very quiet affair; but the happiness of the couple was not the less real because the bridesmaids were few.

After a short tour on the Continent they took possession of the estate near Holcombe-by-Leigh which Mr. Morton Lancaster handed over to them; and certainly the happiest days of the bachelor cousin's life are those which he spends with his newly found relatives.

Philip Northbrook soon got over his little disappointment with regard to Rose Langley, but the same cannot be said of his father.

Her behaviour cut the old man bitterly, and he will never quite recover from the blow.

Mrs. Lancaster lives in a small house near her son, and as she dandles a very small Wilfred upon her knee she often turns to the child's mother, and says,—

"You see, Lillian, I was right. The trouble that was so bitter to bear at the time was, after all, a blessing in disguise; and what seemed the sorest affliction that could happen to us turned out at last to be all for the best."

[THE END.]

THE manufacture of razors by machinery has now become a fixed fact in Germany, and the quality of the article is said to compare favourably with the best Sheffield product, the process being also applicable to scissors making. A die bearing the impress of a razor blade and tongue, or of a scissors blade and bow, as the case may be, is screwed into the bottom of a drop hammer, which is worked by hand over a pulley, a corresponding die being placed on the anvil upon which the hammer falls. The end of the steel bar or ramrod having been heated to a red heat is laid across the anvil die, and the hammer, falling with a weight of about thirty hundred-weight or less, according to the size of the article to be produced, forces the metal into the mould, this, when withdrawn, appearing in the shape of a perfect razor or scissors blank, but surrounded with a fray or fringe, which is afterwards pared with the stripping tools as waste. This operation is repeated indefinitely, according to the extent of the order in hand, the tools being then changed on to another size of blade or scissors. Repeated blows of the hammer are required to forge some of the blanks, regulated by their size and shape.

A GREAT LONGING.

—10—

It was at the time when the roses die that I first saw Amor Thornbury, and the perfume of the queen of flowers hung lingeringly in the air as though loth to leave a world so full of loveliness. How can I describe her as she stood in the quaint, old-fashioned garden of Thornbury Lodge, the pale autumn sunset glinting through the red, brown, and yellow leaves on to her shimmering golden hair and fair, dainty face! How describe the perfect ease and grace of her movements as she turned to greet her father and his visitor—myself!

The birds were twittering sleepily in the great trees that overshadowed the broad pathway, and the distant chiming of church bells stole softly across the wide fields that stretched far—far away to the rugged, grey cliffs that towered above the restless, surging sea.

I was the quiet student of our family, and had earned for myself the rather unromantic cognomen of sober Douglas. Never once in the thirty years of my life had the face of a woman haunted my thoughts, and I had seen a great many beautiful women in my time, for we Gaythornes belonged to one of the noblest families in England, and moved in the highest society; but the face of this fair, frail girl of seventeen held me spell-bound.

"Papa, you are late," she said, and her voice sounded to me sweeter than the trill of the nightingale.

"Yes, my pet; but see, I have brought a visitor with me," replied Colonel Thornbury, in his grave, even tones. "Lord Cranston, my daughter, Amor."

She held out her hand frankly, and the utter unconsciousness of the effect of her marvellous beauty stirred my heart as no coquettish glances would have done. Ah, if I had but known!

We stood conversing in the gathering gloom till a misty haze rose and veiled the square, grey stone house. The birds had long since gone to their rest, and the peal of the bells was stilled, and a quiet, holy calm rested over the whole place; then Junia, an old nurse, who had been with Amor Thornbury ever since her mother's death, came out to tell us that dinner was awaiting us.

Colonel Thornbury walked on in advance, and my heart throbbed like a schoolgirl's as I offered Amor Thornbury my arm, and led her up the rough stone steps at the rear of the Lodge.

The gas had been lighted in the small, oblong hall, and the crimson-tinted globes shed a rosy light over the place.

"You will excuse our rather primitive style, Lord Cranston," observed the Colonel, pausing at the dining-room door. "My daughter and I are very simple in our way of living."

I murmured some words in response; I do not remember what I said, for I was thinking of Amor Thornbury, who was standing under the chandelier, one hand toying with some fern in a jardinière that was placed in front of two tall statues, the other half hidden in the folds of her trailing silver-grey robe. The light fell upon the perfect face, and touched the dress with a tender pink. She would have made the fortune of an artist painted as she stood there.

The dining-room was at the front of the house. It was one of those long, rather low-ceiled rooms that are only seen in country houses. The furniture was some peculiar shade of dark mahoon leather.

Colonel Thornbury placed me at his daughter's side, and all through that meal I watched, in a trance of delight, the stately head as she turned from her father to myself, with its crown of shining, golden hair gleaming dazlingly bright beneath the brilliant light of the chandelier.

I was staying at a friend's house, Cranston Towers, about half a mile's distance from Thornbury Lodge, and it was there I was introduced to Colonel Thornbury, and received an invitation to call and see him whenever I happened to be passing that way.

I had occasion to go into the town on that particular afternoon, and on returning through the

narrow country road where the colonel's house was situated I thought of his words, but little did I imagine, as I passed leisurely up the grass-bordered path, that I was about to meet my fate.

As I walked home in the starlight, after bidding the colonel and his daughter good-by, I wondered how my proud mother and stern old father would receive her, for I was already deeply in love.

She was beautiful—far more so than the girls I met in society—and a lady, but I feared that her want of wealth would be an obstacle which in their eyes would be an insurmountable one.

Our family being one of the oldest in the peerage, they expected me, their eldest son, to make a grand alliance, and had more than once hinted to me that a certain Lady Clare Standish was waiting for me to speak; but I had always put the question aside with some laughing excuse or other.

She was a very nice, lovable girl, I have no doubt; still I did not care to take a wife for whom I had no other feeling than that of friendship.

Now I had met my fate in the person of this sweet, downless flower, Amor Thornbury. Would she ever learn to love me? I asked myself as I stood in my own room at Cranston Towers, gazing out at the dark sky lighted by a few pale stars.

Two or three weeks afterwards Lady Cranston gave a small dance, to which Amor was invited. I had begged to be allowed to take the invitation over, and, of course, I had my way.

I found her in the garden, gathering a bunch of autumn flowers to brighten her father's private room, she told me.

"It will be the first party of this kind I shall ever have attended, and I am sure I shall feel quite frightened amongst all the clever people I shall meet at Cranston Towers," she said, with a low ripple of laughter in her sweet voice, and a smile that belied her words.

"You frightened!" I replied. "It is impossible to imagine you afraid of anyone, you are too unconscious of self."

I bent over her as I spoke, and laid my hand on hers under the pretence of taking a spray of geranium from the fancy basket she held in her hands—slim, fragiley-moulded hands they were, and whiter than the delicate lace that adorned the throat and wrists of her dark dress.

As I gazed into the depths of her luminous violet eyes I longed passionately to clasp the slender form to my heart; but those eyes revealed only friendship for me, and I drew back chilled.

We had met several times since that first evening; but no blush ever rose to her fair face at my approach, she treated me always as a friend.

Would the glad time never come when those sweet eyes would sink beneath my gaze, and the tall, willowy form tremble in my loving arms? But it was madness to think such thoughts.

How could she love me, a comparative stranger? I must be patient, I told myself, and perhaps in the time to come I should have my reward—she was such a child, after all.

Lord Cranston had desired me to ask Colonel Thornbury to bring his daughter over early, and I impressed this upon them most urgently; I should then have an opportunity of a quiet walk in the grounds with the fair girl-love of my heart before the other guests arrived.

Cranston Towers was a large massive building built in the Elizabethan style. It stood in the midst of beautifully laid-out grounds, and was hidden from the view of passers-by by a wood of firs, elms, and oaks, from which the leaves had now nearly all faded.

The sun was just setting when the genial old colonel and his daughter arrived, and the ruddy bricks looked almost golden, as the dying rays touched the building and rested on the western windows.

My host and hostess, after greeting Amor Thornbury, of whom they were very fond, turned to her father, and left me to amuse their young visitor.

Deep in the heart of the wood, where the only sound that broke the almost solemn stillness was the song of birds and the light crushing of

twigs as some frightened hare scudded across the path, was a silvery, natural lake, overhadowed by drooping willows.

It was a lovely spot in the summer time, for then the delicate harebell and the tall wild hyacinth reared their heads amid the long, waving grass, and the air was filled with the sweet, subtle fragrance of wood violets and pale primroses; even now, when the ground was bare, and the trees half naked, the spot was a romantic one, and here I directed my steps with the fairest flower of womanhood at my side.

As we reached the lake a lark rose from some stubble not far distant, filling the air with a burst of melody.

"I am fond of birds," said Amor, standing still beneath the long branches of a willow, and resting her dainty, grey-gloved hand on its trunk, as she gazed dreamily at two or three jays as they flew, first high up above the trees that surrounded us, then low down almost at our feet, while the soft, thrilling notes of the lark still lingered on our ears.

My answer is not worth recording, for I always managed to appear at a disadvantage in the presence of the only woman whose opinion I cared for.

We returned to the house after a time, and then Amor retired to Lady Cranston's boudoir to make some change in her dress, and when they descended to the reception-room the guests began to arrive.

(Continued on page 19.)

BERYL'S MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was all very well for Mr. and Mrs. Dent to decide they would say nothing of the chance of there being a nearer heir than Beryl to the Chesney property; but they soon found Colonel Trevlyn was not disposed to let the grass grow under his feet in his search for his dead friend's elder children, and within a week of his first visit he returned to the Oaks with news so startling that the Dents began to think it might be their duty after all to warn Beryl and her husband.

Yet the quest was very far from finished, and many links in the chain of evidence were incomplete. Only the detective employed by the Colonel had ascertained beyond a doubt that the two girls had certainly been alive within a year, since a doctor came forward in reply to a skillfully worded advertisement, to say that he had attended a Miss Helen Nugent the previous winter. She was then living with her sister in Hinton-street, Islington, and he had told him in the course of their conversation her father had been a city curate. He well remembered the name of Nugent as a fellow student of his own at Oxford, and after a few questions felt sure this was his old friend's daughter.

She was very ill, and needed all sorts of comfort, and specially change of air. He did not disclose himself to her as her father's friend, because he wanted first to find some means of helping her. One of his sisters had a large boarding-house at Bournemouth and he arranged with her to receive Miss Nugent on reduced terms (paid by himself) while letting her believe the invitation was sent for her father's sake. When he called again on his *protégée* to take her the news—he found her flown. She and her sister, who had seemed as settled in Hinton-street as though they had lived there for years, had left, the landlady told him—at an hour's notice, and given her not the slightest clue to their destination.

Colonel Trevlyn felt convinced these girls were the daughters of John Chesney's first marriage, and that in a little while they would be traced, and when he heard this it seemed to Mr. Dent the kindest course to give some warning to the Adairs.

"It lies in a nutshell, Julia," he told his wife: "the money John left to Beryl outright, even

after deducting what was spent on her education, amounts now, at compound interest, to thirty thousand pounds. Twenty-five were advanced to free Adair's estate, and though they have lived in every comfort since their marriage they have not entertained or launched out much, so that I expect the remaining five thousand will cover all they have spent up to now. To my mind it's kinder to tell them they may have to depend upon the revenues of Heron Dyke than to let them run into expenditure they may have to refund in a little while."

"I'm not afraid for Beryl," said Aunt Julia, quickly. "She will be happier without the burden of wealth; but if Sir Denis seems disappointed, if the loss makes even the shadow of difference in him I'll break her heart."

"I've too much faith in Adair to doubt him," said Mr. Dent, loyally. "He's true to the core."

"And you mean to write?"

He shook his head. "I shall run down to Heron Dyke. I don't want to tell Beryl if I can help it, and a letter might fall into her hands; but I shall feel easier after I have given Sir Denis a hint of the danger. Why it's nothing of a journey, wife," seeing she looked dismayed, "only two hours from London, and if the man who brought her up mayn't go and see his niece without a formal invitation things are queer."

There was no gainsaying him after that, and he set off the next day, reaching the rural station at six o'clock. Of course being unexpected no carriage had been sent to meet him, and a neighbouring flower-show having taken all the crawling flies away from the station Mr. Dent had to wait a good hour for a conveyance; but all's well that ends well, and at last he and his portmanteau were jolted along at a funeral pace to the lodge gates of Heron Dyke.

Something, perhaps a feeling of dismay that he might arrive in the very middle of dinner, made Mr. Dent alight at the lodge, and bidding the fly to wait there, go on to the house on foot. He did not in the least doubt Beryl's welcome; but it was fully two hours later than he had expected to arrive, and so he thought he might as well announce his coming before the shabby fly deposited his luggage in the hall.

He had not gone many yards when he caught sight of something which filled him with blank dismay; advancing from the house, dressed in her plainest morning attire, and carrying a travelling-bag, was his niece, Beryl, whom he had imagined as just then at dinner in an elaborate evening toilet.

But was it really Beryl? Could a few months have wrought such a terrible change in the girl he had loved almost as his own child? Why, this Beryl looked as if she had been ill for weeks; there was a hard look of despair on her lovely face which pained the old man's kindly heart. What had happened in her brief married life to crush all the joy out of her expression?

She caught sight of him, staggered, dropped the bag and tried to advance to meet him, but would have fallen had she not been caught in his fatherly arms.

"There, there! Don't take on so, my dear," for the spell-broken she was sobbing bitterly. "It's your Uncle Joe, come to pay you a visit unexpectedly; but you're giving him a poor welcome, dear."

She tried to look up and smile, but the smile wrung his heart; it was sadder far than tears.

He asked no questions, but, with a tact and tenderness no woman could have surpassed, spoke of his pleasure at seeing her, of the difficulties of his journey, and of the shabby fly now waiting at the lodge gate, concluding—

"But I thought you'd be glad to see your old uncle, so here I am!"

"I am glad—very glad! We shall be home directly, and I will send someone for the luggage. You must have some dinner, Uncle Joe."

"Have you had yours, my dear? And where's Adair?"

"He's at a garden party; I was there, but my head ached, and so I came home early."

Mr. Dent picked up the bag she had dropped, and carried it in perfect silence. He knew that ladies of title do not generally attend garden

parties in their plainest morning dress, and that they are not usually met late in the evening carrying travelling bags; but he made no comment. That something was terribly wrong somewhere he felt sure; but this was not the time to seek Beryl's confidence.

"Well," he said, cheerfully (never had it been so difficult for him to appear cheerful), "it's an ill wind that blows no one any good; but, for your headache, I might have found no one to welcome me."

By this time they had reached the front entrance. The butler stood in the hall; Lady Adair spoke to him as quietly as though it was the most usual thing for a visitor to arrive at that hour unexpectedly.

"My uncle has come to spend a few days with me; tell Carrie to get a room ready for him at once and to send up dinner. Whatever she has ready will do; we will not wait for anything to be cooked."

She changed her dress for a pretty rose-coloured teagown, and came down to play the hostess to Uncle Joe with an affection she had never shown him in her maiden days. Nothing would have induced her to invite any of the Denits to Heron Dyke, lest they should see the misery of her married life, but once here she could not refuse Uncle Joe a welcome; besides, to-night she was so heart-sick and wretched she hardly cared whether or not she kept her secret, and it was joy to her to see again one whom she felt she could trust.

As she sat at the head of her husband's table she wondered a little sadly what would have happened had Uncle Joe not arrived to-night; would she have carried out her half-formed plan of leaving Heron Dyke? goaded well-nigh to madness by her husband's treachery, would she have deserted his house?

The meal did not last long; when it was over Mr. Dent asked again when Sir Denis might be expected.

"Oh, not for ages!" returned Beryl; "they were going to have fireworks, or dancing, I forget which; and he is sure to stay till the very end. Come and see my boudoir, Uncle Joe, it is the prettiest room in the house."

Mr. Dent admired it warmly; then, as he took a seat on a sofa by the open window, he made Beryl sit down beside him, and said, gently,—

"Sir Denis must have taken a great deal of trouble in preparing this room for his bride."

"Don't, Uncle Joe," said Beryl, hoarsely; "don't talk like that, I can't bear it."

Mr. Dent took the thin, trembling hand in his, but he went on talking.

"My dear, there's something wrong with you; I have loved you as one of my own children, Beryl; won't you tell me what it is?"

Dead silence. With her disengaged hand she played idly with the lace trimmings on her teagown; she could not lift her eyes and meet her uncle's; Beryl, the erstwhile frank and fearless, could not look Mr. Dent in the face.

"My dear," went on Joe Dent, simply, "where were you going when I met you an hour ago?"

"I—I don't know."

"You used to speak the truth, child," he said a little sternly. "Why tell me a falsehood now?"

"It is not a falsehood," she answered, stung into defending herself. "I mean just what I say. I don't know where I was going; I hadn't thought. I only wanted to run away and never to set eyes on this hateful place again."

"Beryl!"

This was worse even than he had feared. His tone was full of trouble.

"I mean it," she said, slowly; "I should have kept it from you if I could; I am miserable. I thought I could have stayed here and hid my wretched secret from the world; but the task is beyond my strength. I only want to go away where no one knows me, and hide myself from everyone."

"And break the vows you made before the altar not many months ago—how about that, Beryl?"

She shivered from head to foot, and something, perhaps the agony in her face, made honest Joseph Dent repent his sternness.

"My dear," he said, in a gentler tone, "perhaps I have misjudged you. Only tell me the truth, and let me try to help you. Beryl, what you tell me shall be a secret between us two. I will keep it even from my wife."

Silence; but it seemed to him her face softened just a little.

"Have you quarrelled with your husband?"

"No," said Beryl, drowsily. "I think we are too far apart even to quarrel. I have found him out, that is all."

Mr. Dent looked very grave.

"Harsh language that, Beryl. Of your married life, of course, I know nothing; but man never loved woman better than Denis Adair loved you up to your wedding day."

"He loved my fortune," she corrected.

"Oh, child, has the old morbid suspicion come back to you? Beryl, I am ashamed of you!"

"He confessed it himself," she said, sullenly, "when he proposed to me he knew I was an heiress; but for that he would not have married me."

"When he proposed to you he knew you had some money," corrected Mr. Dent; "he was too poor to have married a penniless girl; but when he heard the extent of your fortune he was electrified."

"Or seemed to be."

"Beryl, something has poisoned your heart against your husband. Tell me, what is it?"

She hesitated.

"It will be safe with me," went on Joseph Dent. "Of course I am a man of the world, and growing old to boot. I can't be as romantic as a young girl; but, Beryl, I married for love thirty years ago, and I still hold my wife as Heaven's best gift, so I shall understand you."

Blushing crimson Beryl got out her story. Joseph Dent listened in indignant surprise.

"I don't believe it," he said, when Beryl had finished; "don't look so indignantly, my dear. I've no doubt you believe it; but you have been deceived."

Beryl shook her head.

"See, here," said Mr. Dent; "you assert that Sir Denis was engaged to a girl in humble life before he met you, and jilted her for the sake of your fortune—is that it?"

"Yes," she nearly died of a broken heart. Her sister fetched me to show the havoc his cruelty had made."

"And asked you for money?"

"No; she wanted me to promise not to marry him."

"But if her sister was dying your marriage could not matter."

Beryl winced.

"I—I thought she was dying then. It seems she recovered. The girl, her sister, is actually staying here under a false name as companion to a neighbour of ours. I heard Denis talking to her to-day, and asking after her sister."

"My dear Beryl," said Mr. Dent, very gravely, "I believe you are troubling yourself needlessly; but, anyhow, you are to blame. After this girl came to you at the Oaks with her extraordinary story you had two courses open to you. You might have demanded an explanation from Sir Denis before your marriage, or have declined to fulfil your promise. Having married him in spite of the story it is your duty to act as though you had never heard it."

"Uncle Joe!"

"But I believe even now if you want to Sir Denis he could explain everything."

"I told him on our wedding day that he had married me for my money, and he never attempted to deny it."

"Did you also tell him about—Nell?"

"No, I was ashamed; and where was the use? Besides, I thought her dying."

"And now?"

"She is alive, and at Ventnor. The two sisters lived together in lodgings, and one acted as typewriter to Denis before we were married."

"My dear child, thousands of women earn their living by type writing, and their employers are chiefly men, but a love affair is very seldom the result. By the way, who told you these interesting particulars if you have not mentioned the subject to Sir Denis?"

"Dick Chesney!"

"What?"

"Oh, I forgot you didn't like him. He is secretary to Mr. Blake, our nearest neighbour, and he is a friend of Sir Denis. He comes over pretty often, and I rather like him. I suppose he is careless and extravagant, but he is not so cruel and wicked as Denis."

"May Heaven forgive you, Beryl," cried Joseph Dent, angrier than he had ever been with her in her life. "Fancy comparing your husband with that scoundrel! Do you know, pray, where Richard Chesney would be but for my weakness? I'll tell you, in a convict prison!"

"What?"

"He forged my name some years ago, and for the sake of the family I hushed it up. Beryl, I don't believe there's a sin that fellow is not capable of, and that is the man you suffer to speak lightly to you of your husband."

"He didn't," said Beryl, quickly. "He only told me that Mrs. Blake's companion much resembled a girl whom he had met at my husband's chambers, a typewriter. She had reminded me of the girl who came to me at the Oaks with that terrible story of Denis' falseness. To-day I saw them together and heard him address her by name."

"Beryl, you are a simpleton. Do you suppose if Sir Denis had played the part you assign to him he could have met his victim's sister on friendly terms? Why, child, he would have avoided her as men avoid the plague."

"He tried to prevent my going to the garden-party, declared I was not well, and so on. Of course I thought then it was to prevent my meeting her."

"You have judged him as cruelly as his bitterest enemy could have done, and yet—once you professed you loved him."

"Oh, Uncle Joe, can you doubt it? If I had not loved him I should not be the miserable wreck you see."

"Shall I tell you what I believe, Beryl?" asked Mr. Dent, gravely. "You know I would not deceive you. Will you listen to my opinion?"

"Yes," she said, meekly, "but nothing in the world can give me back my faith and trust in Denis. I can never believe in anyone who has once deceived me."

"May Heaven be more merciful to you than you have been to others," he said, sadly. "Now listen. I believe from first to last you have been deceived by a cruel plot, the work of that fiend in human shape, Dick Chesney."

"But what could he have to do with it?" demanded Beryl, "and he does not even like Miss Newcome. He told me so himself. Why should he plan with her to spoil my life?"

"Because he has no conscience, and would sell his soul for gold. Now, Beryl, you have not heard much about Richard Chesney, but probably he heard all there was to hear about you."

"But, I don't understand."

"Listen, dear. For many years your life has been the only barrier between Dick Chesney and enormous wealth. If you died unmarried the bulk of your fortune went to him."

"So Aunt Julia told me."

"Well, there is no doubt my worthless brother-in-law learned your aversion to all talk of love and marriage. I don't doubt that he rejoiced at it, and began to think himself sure of being your heir. I don't want to alarm you, dear, but your mother died at the age of twenty-four of no special disease beyond a general fading away. When the news of your engagement reached Dick Chesney his one desire would be to break it off at all risks. If he could part you from Denis Adair the chances were you would not form another attachment for a few years. You might in fact die unmarried. It would be worth trying to part you from your lover. The girl who came to you may have been just a tool in his hands. Poor and unscrupulous, she and her sister may have simply repeated the words he placed in their mouths."

"Her sister never spoke at all: I only saw her asleep. The other girl showed me letters and papers which bore out her story. Oh, Uncle Joe, at the very time Denis proposed to me he

was writing in terms of passionate endearment to this other girl."

"My dear child, if Dick Chesney could forge my signature what is to prevent his forging other people's? If Denis really employed this girl as a typist she would have specimens of his writing in her possession from which she and her accomplice could practise."

Beryl shuddered.

"Surely no two people could be so cruel, so vile and heartless."

"When you live to my age, dear, you'll find there is very little people will not do for money," he answered sadly. "It seems to me you are far more ready to believe your husband a scoundrel than to credit Dick Chesney and Miss Newcome with a certain amount of villainy."

Beryl was crying quietly to herself.

"What do you advise me to?" she asked sadly; "If I am mistaken I must have wounded Denis so terribly that he will never forgive me."

"People forgive a great deal when they love," said Uncle Joe, stoutly; "but the first thing is to find out the truth."

"But how?"

"You can't speak to your husband," he said, with a delicate few could have credited the prosperous business man with possessing; "you'd say too much or too little, and I—well I tell you plainly, I should be ashamed to let Adair think I doubted him; but I still have a certain hold over Dick Chesney. I'll go to him. If he won't confess his share in the business, or if there's no share to confess, then there's only one thing for it, to go straight to Miss Newcome and insist on seeing her sister."

Beryl shivered.

"The sister looked sweet and good, but I am afraid of this girl; there is an expression in her eyes that terrifies me, and yet she is like me. When I look at her it is as though I see myself, grown haggard, despairing and reckless."

"Did you recognize her when you first saw her down here?"

"No. Her hair is dyed, and she is got up in the costume of a professional nurse; I only felt dimly conscious that I had seen her somewhere before."

A silence fell on uncle and niece. Mr. Dent was wondering how he was to meet Sir Denis without betraying Beryl's confidence, and Lady Adair was thinking wistfully that her husband would soon be home, and pondering as to how he would receive her uncle.

"I think I'll go to bed," she said at last; "if you don't mind, Uncle Joe. Denis won't be much longer, and I don't think I can meet him to-night."

CHAPTER XXII.

DICK CHESNEY'S feelings as he drove back to the Hall alone were not quite to be envied.

It had been one thing to plot against Beryl Adair's domestic happiness when she was a stranger to him; it was quite another to deliberately cause her misery when he saw her constantly, and rather liked her.

Thinking over the affairs of the Chesney family generally on that solitary drive Dick decided that of his two step-nieces he far preferred the younger.

Audrey was as bad for a woman as he could be for a man; he felt no shame in talking to her, or unfolding his evil schemes, because he felt that no depth of evil would shock her.

He had begun by hating Beryl, but there was something in the whiteness of her soul, the purity and innocence of her womanhood, which commanded the nearest approach to reverence Dick had felt for years.

"Well," he reflected, and absolutely with pleasure, "when Audrey and Helen came in for the property, and he received his twenty thousand pounds, he could afford to let Beryl and her husband be happy in their own way."

"And I shouldn't be surprised if they made a better thing of their life poor than they have managed to do rich. But Adair's a fool; he actually thinks his wife doesn't care for him, and anyone has only to watch her eyes as she looks at

him to know that in spite of their estrangement she just worships him. If any good woman had cared for me like that I might have made a better thing of my life."

The festivities were still at their height when he reached the Hall, and he had to resume his duties of making himself generally agreeable to the guests, so that he had no chance of watching Denis Adair and Audrey.

He explained his recent absence to Mrs. Blake, who praised his kind consideration in taking Lady Adair home, and then expressed her fear that his niece was very delicate.

"And she doesn't look too happy either, poor dear!" went on the good lady. "I do hope your friend's not unkind to her."

Adair was passing at that moment; he must have heard every word, and Dick could see him wince.

"You ought to go home," Audrey said to him, with her cynical air, "and dance attendance on your bride!"

"Lady Adair does not require my ministrations," he answered, coldly. "Once more, for the sake of old times, let me urge you to end this deception. I assure you the Blakes would never forgive you if they discovered it."

Audrey answered with a little toss of her head.

"It is just possible, Sir Denis, the Blakes' approval may not be much to me in the future; I hope soon to be independent of their caprices."

Sir Denis thought she had been much preferable in the old days in London; he hardly recognized the girl he had rescued from fainting at the British Museum and honestly done his best to help in the long, dreary autumn. Somehow with her new name Audrey seemed to have developed a new hardness which jarred on him strangely.

"I will not ask for your confidence," he said, quietly, "but there is one person who has a right to it—your sister, does she know what you are doing? Does she share the future to which you are looking forward?"

"Nell will be a great lady!" said Audrey, defiantly. "She will have more money than she can spend. People will forget then that she is a cripple and deformed; she will be as much fêted and sought after as your wife is now."

"I wish," said Sir Denis, speaking on a strange impulse, "that you would give me Nell's address!"

"I have told you; she is at Ventnor."

"But that is too vague. I want to write to her."

"And tell her about me?"

"Perhaps."

"You shall never do that! I won't have Nell distressed or made unhappy. In a very little while I shall be able to go back to her and take care of her, and I won't let you frighten her about me first."

They parted. Dancing had begun, and Audrey knew her employers too well to engross one of their leading guests when he was needed elsewhere.

She went dutifully to Mrs. Blake's side, but that lady did not require her at present, and graciously told her to go and enjoy herself.

For a few minutes she remained watching the brilliant scene; then, with a strange feeling of repulsion, she turned away and retraced her steps to the spot where she had sat earlier in the afternoon with Sir Denis Adair.

Audrey Nugent had expected to feel triumphant. According to Dick Chesney's story she and Nell would soon be recognized as John Chesney's eldest children; all that was now Beryl's would pass to them; to Nell in name, to Audrey so far as the use and enjoyment went. Even if Nell (and the gentle girl was capable of it) wished to leave Lady Adair in undisputed possession of their father's property, she could not do it; she might sign away her own rights, she could not sign away Audrey's. No; when once those missing links in the chain of evidence had been found Audrey must hold her own, either as an heiress or as the managing sister of one. Money, luxuries, everything she had ever coveted would be well within her reach.

Stay, though; not quite everything. In the days when she had first met Denis Adair she envied his unknown *foncée* not only her wealth but his love.

With a strange, mixed feeling of discontent Audrey realised that here the detested Beryl would still triumph over her. Her eyes, sharpened by envy, read Denis as an open book. He might be estranged from his wife, but he loved her still. If his sentiments had changed at all since the halcyon time of their engagement the difference was this—that he loved her more, not less.

No; Audrey and Nell might strip Beryl of much, but they could not rob her of Adair's love; even if her health failed (everyone around Heron Dyke remarked on Lady Adair's fragile appearance), and she died in early youth, like her mother, still Audrey could never be caught to Sir Denis; in the eyes of the law she would be his deceased wife's sister.

Audrey stood by the water's edge, and realised dimly this one thing was impossible. She could not hope ever to be Denis Adair's wife.

"But there are plenty of things money can buy," the girl thought to herself, "so why do I harp on that one thing it can't! Why, to see that haughty Beryl brought to poverty will alone be a delight to me. Twenty thousand pounds is rather a heavy reward to pay to my worthy half-uncle; but I suppose he deserves it, as without his aid I should never have dreamed I was the heiress of the Chesneys."

She thought of Nell—poor, patient Nell, to whom she had sent only two letters in all the weeks of her absence—letters which told nothing of her doings, and had actually been posted in London, so as to give no clue to her whereabouts. Somehow, as Audrey stood there by the water, she seemed to see her sister's face reflected in the lake, Nell's pale face looking very thin and fragile, under the masses of golden hair floating round it like a silken veil.

She could not bear to stand there and watch the vision; real or fancied, it frightened her, and with a shudder of sudden dread she turned away and found her way back to the dancers.

Denis Adair stood talking to his hostess. He was saying something about taking leave.

"Now don't go, Sir Denis," pleaded Mrs. Blake, "if once you do it'll set people thinking of the time, and everyone'll be following your example."

Denis smiled.

"I am not such an important person as that, Mrs. Blake. My wife has been gone for a long time, and she is at home alone."

"Lady Adair will forgive you for staying," rejoined Mrs. Blake, "she's much too sweet-tempered to have a cross word for anyone."

But Denis persisted, and took his leave. He was more anxious about Beryl than he had shown. Wide as was the gulf between them his wife was very dear to him, and he did not like to think of her having to spend a long lonely evening.

But it was late when he left the Hall, and his horse, in spite of a long repose, seemed not in the least inclined to hurry, so that it was long past ten when he alighted at his own door.

The lights in his wife's window indicated that she had retired, and he gave a brief order for supper in the smoking-room, when the butler informed him of the unexpected guest.

"Mr. Dent! When did he come! Where is he?"

"He's in the library, Sir Denis. As to when he came I can't rightly say. He came in with my lady after she had been taking a stroll in the grounds, and she ordered a room to be prepared for him at once."

Uncle Joe had no cause to complain of his greeting from the master of the house. Sir Denis welcomed him with warm cordiality.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Dent. It was good of you to give us such a pleasant surprise."

For the first time since the shock of meeting Beryl in the grounds Uncle Joe remembered the real object of his journey.

"I'm afraid you won't call it a pleasant surprise, Sir Denis, when you hear what I have come about."



AUDREY REALISED ONE THING WAS IMPOSSIBLE. SHE COULD NOT HOPE EVER TO BE DENIS ADAIR'S WIFE.

"Did Beryl send for you?" asked Denis, suddenly, "she—she is not happy; but —"

"Put that idea out of your head," said Joe, heartily. "Beryl would be the last person in the world to send for anyone in order to grumble about you to them, and I should be the last to listen to her if she did."

The butler announced that supper was ready. Mr. Dent declared he could eat nothing more after his recent dinner; but he would come and bear Sir Denis company at his meal.

The servants, at a sign from their master, retired, and the two men who—unlike though they were in most things—really liked and trusted each other, were left alone.

"I hope Beryl was not knocked up to-day. I warned her to stay at home, she looked so white and ill; but she persisted in going to the garden party."

"She looks too pale and thin," said Uncle Joe; "don't you go to think I'm reproaching you, Sir Denis; but I am afraid the child's out of health. I wish you would let me take her home with me. My girls are all away, and my wife will be delighted to fuss over Beryl, and put her to her heart's content. It's that sort of thing she wants, poor child."

"Does my wife wish to leave me?"

"Of course not," said Uncle Joe mendaciously; "in fact I haven't dared mention it to her, but when you've heard my errand I think you'll agree it's better for us all that Beryl should come to the Oaks for a few weeks."

"I can't make her happy," confessed Adair, with a groan. "I love her, Mr. Dent, and Heaven knows I want her to be happy, but she distrusts everything I do, and every word I say. She is quite changed from the gentle loving girl I knew at Broadga' one little year ago."

"Don't look back," said the older man simply, "always look forward, my boy; and now can you stand a shock?"

"About my wife?"

"In a measure, yes; but nothing to do with her health or feelings towards yourself."

"Go on, sir," said Adair, "I prefer anything to suspense."

"You won't tell Beryl; remember, as yet she has no suspicion."

"You may trust me; now what is it?"

"Simply this. My brother-in-law, John Chesney, was married twice, and left two children by his first wife. If either of these survive, Beryl is not his heiress."

Sir Denis looked very grave.

"But for one thing I should be positively thankful."

"And that?"

"The money spent on Heron Dyke. I shall have to get a fresh mortgage on the place to refund it."

"No. The fortune left to Beryl absolutely by name will more than cover that, and leave a balance of five thousand pounds. If the worst comes I shall double that sum, so that the interest may be enough to keep my niece in pin money. Can you manage to live on the revenues of Heron Dyke?"

"Of course!" said Sir Denis promptly, "and be quite as rich as I care about, too. Oh! Mr. Dent, but for Beryl's sake I could almost pray that your fears may be realized. Then, at least, she would not reproach me with marrying her for her money."

"I think there is no doubt the other two girls will be found," said Mr. Dent; "my wife and I talked it over, and thought we ought to warn you, but you launched out into expenses right and natural now, but which might involve you in debt if the blow falls."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart," said Denis. "I would far rather know the truth; but while there is any doubt I should like the matter kept from Beryl."

"That is why I suggest her coming to us. If she is at home you may be expected to give lavish entertainments and parties. Let Beryl return to Clapton with me, and stay with us until something is settled one way or the other."

"It shall be as she wishes."

He paced the room in silence for at least five minutes, then coming to a stop opposite Mr. Dent he looked up into his face and asked abruptly,—

"What has she told you?"

"My dear fellow," said Joseph Dent simply, "don't ask me any questions; people always suffer who try to interfere between husband and wife. I believe Beryl loves you dearly, and I can see (forgive me) that she is desperately unhappy. I believe there is some evil influence at work dividing you farther and farther, and I shouldn't be surprised if it was that scoundrel of a brother-in-law of mine—Dick Chesney."

Denis shook his head.

"Chesney's not a good man, but I don't think he's base enough for that."

"He's base enough to commit forgery. I'm afraid Sir Denis, neither of my brothers-in-law were much to boast of in the way of character. Dick forged my name some years ago for a good round sum, and John behaved like a coward; left his elder children to starve—for aught he cared—rather than confess his first marriage; deceived his second wife and broke her heart; while finally he placed poor little Beryl in a terribly false position. No; my wife's a good true woman, Sir Denis, and I do believe in spite of her nervous whims and fancies, my niece, to the is just such another; but when it comes Beryl, men-folk Chesney it's quite another question."

Sir Denis did not give his opinion on this point. Almost before Mr. Dent had finished speaking a piercing shriek from the room immediately over them rang through the house, and Denis Adair, with a white, horror-stricken face, rushed madly upstairs, for in spite of the change terror and distress had made in it, he recognised the voice as his wife's.

She was in peril or distress, and to rush to her assistance seemed the only thing possible to him.

(To be continued.)



"YOU WERE TAUGHT ABROAD, MADAM, I UNDERSTAND?" SAID MR. LORAIN, SUDDENLY.

THE ROMANCE OF IVY MOSS.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE THE STORM.

"HAVE you been stopping, then, Dundas, with this Count Ravenna?" Keith Falconer inquired.

"Yes," replied Ronald, sinking into the deepest and easiest chair the room contained. "He said he felt lonely, you see, and wanted somebody. And so, as he was very snugly housed at Barton's, I saw no reason why—"

"What, in Dover Street?" put in Keith, in accents of quiet astonishment.

"Yes—Dover Street," answered the other, nodding indolently at his friend. "Ravenna, as it happens, is 'flush' just now."

The becoming gray suit, the patent-leather boots, the smart walking-stick, and the gold ring which encircled the fawn silk and crimson tie, were all now accounted for.

Ivy no longer marvelled to herself over the perfection of her husband's appearance. For the plain fact was this, and she knew it: Count Ravenna was a confirmed gambler. But, even in those days when they had known him in Munich and elsewhere, the Italian had never, in that direction, been a match for Ronald Dundas.

When Mr. Falconer was gone, and indeed for the remainder of that day, Ronald's curious and highly unpleasant humour towards his wife underwent no change. She hardly knew how to interpret it, or in what light to view it. It was in truth almost suggestive of—well, she cared not to imagine what. She chose rather to ascribe the mood to one of his manifold "ways," and kept her temper admirably, she flattered herself, under the sting of his provoking manner.

He had two scotch and brandies before dinner; and when the weary lodging-house maid-of-all-work toiled up from the basement regions to spread the cloth for luncheon, as Ronald called it—she having left the sitting-room door ajar, so that the sea-wind, rushing in at the open bay-

window, blew his newspapers and society-journals into a wild confusion together—he swore at her volubly but quietly, smiling all the while. But it was only his lips that smiled—there was a darkling, savage light in his half-closed eyes.

Ronald ate his "luncheon" in silence, with a magazine open by his plate, alternately taking a mouthful and turning a page. The meal over, he lit one of those beautifully fragrant cigars which he had brought down with him from town—got, doubtless, from his friend, the Count Ravenna—and then dragged Derrick by the arm to his knee.

Like a shy, small culprit in a pinafore the child stood there, arraigned before his judge.

"And so you have been horribly dull, I suppose, young man," said his father, "whilst I have been away from you all—ah!"

"Yes—no, father," said Derrick, in the weakest of whispers.

"Come, speak up!" shouted Ronald, giving his little son a slight shake.

Derrick, with drooping head, became dumb.

"Now I dare say you have had lots of rides in a goat-chaise—eh?" said Ronald, more kindly. "Is that about the figure of it, little man?"

"Yes, father."

"And built castles in the air—no, I mean upon the sands?"

"Yes, father."

"And driven in a carriage to Ipswich, I'll wager anything; and to L denstair's; and to B-achford; and to—well, dickens knows where we haven't been in a carriage with Mr. Falconer—always with Mr. Falconer—eh, little son Roderick?"

"Yes, father," repeated the child, brightening, reassured by a smile—a queer one though it was—from Ronald, and by the magic of the name that he knew and loved; "and we've been to the great glass place to hear Miss Featherstone sing, and give in the monkey's tuns and nuts, and they made such a noise—"

"Oh, done all that, have you?" his father put

in. "Why, bless me, you can't have been so dull then, after all?"

"No, father."

"Humph—ah!" commented Ronald, with a mock scowl at his little son. "You want looking after a bit, young man, I can plainly see, when your father's away on business in London! I must look you up the next time I go—yes, I must—in a dark cupboard, little son Roderick, and take the key in my pocket!"

As the child began to look pale and frightened, and Ronald feared that the tears were about to flow, he gave him a push, and said, airily,—

"There, cut along with you now—I'll forgive you this once; but mind and be a better boy next time, that's all!"

Just as Ivy and little Derrick were about to sit down to their tea, Ronald, with his new light hat and silver-mounted walking stick, strolled into the sitting-room and gave out his intention of wandering, as he said, as far as the Grand Hotel. He wanted a game at billiards or something; and perhaps Keith Falconer had got back from Ipswich, said he.

Ivy had not yet taken her seat in front of the small tray, but was standing at the open window, looking out at the calm sea. It was seven o'clock. One after another the lamps along the heights were being lighted.

Someone—a woman with a mandolin—was singing under the windows of the Grand Hotel. Stoke Bay visitors, in smart apparel, were hastening off to the concert in the Winter Gardens, to hear the popular "lady-serio," Miss Hyacinth Featherstone, from London.

Ronald Dundas came to his wife's side.

He put his arm around her waist, and just brushed her cheek with his moustache.

"So sorry, is she," said he jestingly, "so sorry that her true knight and master has returned? And yet—was she not?—she was moped to death without him!"

Steadily—perhaps not without contempt—she turned and met his dark and cruel smiling eye;

and, as she did so, with cool firm hands she loosened his fingers from about her waist.

"I do not understand you, Ronald," she said.

"We live and learn, sweet Ivy," he laughed, odiously obscure.

"We do," was her brief reply.

As she spoke she moved coldly away from him; and again stared—but now blindly, for her bosom was rising visibly, and tears, proud hot tears had started to her eyes—out at the fast-darkening violet sea.

"Shall I bring Keith back with me, if I find him at the Grand?" said Ronald Dundas—"eh, Ivy."

"Pray please yourself, Ronald," she answered.

"And you too, of course," returned he jauntily.

Oh, how could he be so cruel to her! how could he find the heart to wound her so!

What had she done to deserve it! She had not deserved it—she had not, she told herself passionately.

Even that untranslatable smile of his was like a stab; and he knew it.

This time Ivy vouchsafed no reply to his remark. She would not—nay, she could not; for words choked her.

So Ronald called out,—

"Ta-ra, sweetheart," and shut the door.

Ivy heard him laughing quietly to himself as he descended the stairs; and in that moment—Heaven forgive her!—she hated him.

It early became apparent that the old days, or rather evenings, of the Minerva-crescent kind, in all their odious risk and perplexing nature, were to be revived here at their Stoke Bay apartments; and once more to the soul of Ivy returned the old uneasiness, the old anxiety, when she perceived that this was inevitably to be the case.

The bare sight of the cards and the name of eucare seemed to smite her heart with a dandy chill; but she felt herself utterly powerless to hinder the play.

So well knowing Ronald's temper, she dared not interfere.

Nevertheless, she felt as certain as she was of her own existence that evil, sooner or later, must come of this bad state of things. And the foreboding, alas, proved a true one.

She used to sit silently behind the curtains within the open bay-window whilst the men played their eucare game; her arms upon the window-sill, her head in her hand; looking out with troubled eyes at the vast plain of water before her, upon which sometimes the moonbeams fell weirdly and chilly, and quivered for miles in a thin, bright, amber track athwart the restless bosom of the lone dark sea.

One morning Ronald came in, in a boisterous humour and said,—

"What d'ye think, Ivy? For the last half-hour or so I have been on the pier with the Featherstone lot—Hughie Papillon and that young fool Ludovic Exe was there, and that cad Loraine, as he calls himself, the manager of the Pagoda, who it seems has run down for a few days just to see how the fair Cynthia is getting along at the Winter Gardens. What a pity it seems that young Ludovic Exe is bent upon making such a confounded ass of himself, doesn't it?"

"How do you mean?" Inquired Keith Falconer, who had accompanied Ronald home.

"Why, he swears that he will marry the girl," answered Dundas, with a shrug.

"And a man like Lord Exe might certainly do worse," rejoined Mr. Falconer calmly. "If he is in earnest he cannot do less."

"Well, it is no affair of mine," said Dundas in his airy way. "He may marry the barrister's widow herself, if he pleases. But I was going to tell you, Mrs. Featherstone gives a supper to-morrow evening—that is to say when the lovely Cynthia returns from the Winter Gardens—and the old lady got me aside this morning and made me promise that I would bring you, Ivy, to the affair—also 'my friend, Mr. Falconer,' the old girl added hospitably. She would hear of no refusal. She says she must do something in a

small way to celebrate 'dear Cynthia's' engagement, which is now, it appears, an open secret. There will be only Loraine, the Earl himself, and young Papillon, as guests—with ourselves, of course. Just a nice little family party, as the barrister's widow says."

"I—I don't think I'll go, Ronald, thank you," Ivy observed gently.

"Not go! Why, pray?" he demanded brusquely.

"There is Derrick, you see," she began; "and—and—"

"Oh, hang it all, Miss Spicer can look after the youngster, can't she? I have promised for you, Ivy, and you must accompany me. I don't care about going alone; and what's more, my dear, I am not going alone."

Ivy said no more.

It was easier to yield to him than to resist him. Experience had made her wise.

"You, Falconer, will make no fuss about it, I suppose!" said Ronald, carelessly.

"Oh, no," answered Keith, in accents as careless as his friend's. "Why should I—Stoke Bay is not Belgravia. Since you and Mrs. Dundas are going, I'll come too. I should say it would be rather amusing."

"And now you'll stop and eat your luncheon with us!" said Ronald, boisterously.

Keith for a moment glanced at Ivy's troubled face. Answered "Yes" quietly; and stayed.

"I am happy to congratulate you, Miss Featherstone," said Ivy, sincerely, meeting mother and daughter on the heights. "I believe I may with propriety do so now!"

"Yes, you may certainly do so now, Mrs. Dundas," replied the practical Cynthia equably. "You see, I have learnt that it is always wisest to make sure of a good thing before you begin to brag about it; or I should have told you something with regard to Lord Exe and his attentions to me at the theatre before you left London for Stoke Bay."

In a sudden burst of maternal pride, which the good creature was unable any longer to repress, Mrs. Featherstone struck in with a sort of gasp.

"Only fancy, Mrs. Dundas! One can hardly believe it all yet. He is a real live lord, and a good-hearted and a well-meaning one into the bargain—in spite of his dandy airs and his shiny boots, as I tell Cynthia. There's to be no long engagement, and Cynthia by-and-by, if she lives, will be Her Grace the Duchess of Dartmoor. It seems like a dream!" said the poor barrister's widow, not without pardonable emotion. Whilst the practical Cynthia merely laughed indulgently at her mother's weakness.

"Well, she is a thorough good girl, and she deserves her good fortune," Ivy whispered sympathetically, to the older woman when they parted, promising to be present at the supper on the following evening.

And in due course the following evening came. In a lull of the conversation Ronald Dundas called out, appealing to his wife,—

"Ivy—I say, Ivy—wasn't it so, now?"

He had been arguing masterfully something or other with young Papillon and Mr. Falconer. It so happened that Ivy was able to settle satisfactorily the point in question mooted between them.

In a few words having done so, she turned again to Mrs. Featherstone.

"Ah, me!" said that lady, with a sentimental sigh, "never can I forget the old days whenever I hear your husband call you 'Ivy.' If I am taking a liberty forgive me, Mrs. Dundas."

Ivy smiled her pardon.

"Can you not?" she said. "And may I ask why not?"

"I never heard the name in my life," went on Mrs. Featherstone pensively, "until I went to live at Haggerston—and that indeed was many years ago. My poor hard-working husband was alive then."

"Was he?" put in Ivy gently, not knowing what else to say.

"Yes, Mrs. Dundas. But we were as poor as church mice, and rented two rooms only in the Godolphin-road. It was just before Cynthia was

born," sighed Mrs. Featherstone, not uncheerfully.

"Well, Mrs. Dundas, at the top of the house, occupying only one room, there was a man and a woman by the name of Robinson—at least, they gave out that Robinson was their name; but I am afraid that no one believed they were man and wife, or that Robinson was their real name."

"One sweet little child they had, who was just as shy and timid in manner sometimes as your own dear little angel, Mrs. Dundas. Indeed, I am often reminded somehow of that lovely little child at Haggerston when I look at your own pretty darling. But when I knew Baby Robinson, she couldn't have been as old as—"

"And was his name Derrick too, then?" Ivy put in absently.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Dundas! Don't you follow me? The little Haggerston child's name was 'Ivy' exactly the same as your own."

"Ivy!" exclaimed the wife of Ronald Dundas. "How curious—a little girl, then!" she added with a smile. "Why, my name after all, it appears, Mrs. Featherstone, is by no means such an uncommon one as I have generally been inclined to think it. My husband once had a very young cousin whom he unhappily never saw. She died, I have heard, before he came home from India, and she was called 'Ivy.' There is nothing new under the sun. How true is that!"

"Well, I never!" commented Mrs. Featherstone, staring. "But I was going to tell you, Mrs. Dundas, that—that something very shocking happened at that house in the Godolphin-road; and little Ivy Robinson was fetched away from it afterwards by her grandfather, I—I fancy it was. No, it was her—"

"Something very shocking!" Ivy interrupted, beginning to feel a genuine interest in Mrs. Featherstone's inconsequent narrative. "And what was that?"

"A murder," answered Mrs. Featherstone, lowering her voice, tremulously, "a dreadful murder—"

Again Ivy found herself interrupting the narrator, both her interest and her curiosity now strongly awakened.

"Not the little child, I hope!" she said, quickly.

"No, Mrs. Dundas! I told you just now—or I meant to—that Baby Robinson was fetched away from that house at Haggerston directly after her father had—"

Here, however, Mr. Hector Loraine sauntered up, and requested an introduction to Mrs. Dundas.

Whereupon Mrs. Featherstone, bridling, performed all that was necessary in the circumstances.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BREAKING OF THE TEMPEST.

MR. HECTOR LORAIN—whose real name, by the way, was something quite different—was a short stout man, in a velvet jacket, wearing many valuable rings upon his fat and not over-clean hands. His buff waistcoat was adorned with an immense gold chain and monogrammed locket. Altogether, in his way, Mr. Hector Loraine was a dazzling sort of person.

At supper Ivy sat between the manager of the Pagoda and young Hughie Papillon; and each of them made himself exceedingly agreeable.

And then after supper Cynthia Featherstone sang good-humouredly to her mother's guests—rendering her serio-comic efforts with all the wit and vivacity of a trained *comédienne* of her kind.

And the Earl of Exe sat by her at the piano as she played, his arm thrown round the back of her chair. He was very much in love, and very jealous. He meant everyone to understand, it was clear, that Cynthia belonged to him—that she was his own, his very own, and nobody else's.

And then when Miss Featherstone gave the company her great Pagoda success—"Never despair whilst the world goes round"—Mr. Hector Loraine thumped the table until all the glasses and decanters rattled together.

"I am sure you are a born musician, Mrs. Dundas," called out Mr. Loraine presently, "from the style in which you played that accompaniment just now. You sing yourself—now don't you, madam?"

"Rather!" cried Cynthia Featherstone, in her hearty, unselfish way. "Mrs. Dundas, if she pleases, can beat us all hollow."

"Mrs. Dundas can sing like a nightingale," Mrs. Featherstone was assuring Mr. Loraine earnestly; "and I am sure that she will kindly favour us this evening. Won't you, dearie?" turning from her daughter's manager and appealing affectionately to Ivy.

It would be foolish, Ivy felt, to refuse when it was plain that they were all against a refusal—to make a host of trivial excuses when she had actually no sensible one ready.

So, though she herself was scarcely that night in the vein for singing, she at once complied with as gay a grace as she could.

After a moment's ruminating, uncertain what would please her audience best—her repertory and that of Cynthia being so dissimilar—she remembered and sang the ballad "Parting," knowing that something old, simple, and pathetic can never be wholly unwelcome.

Then Ivy knew that she was not mistaken in her choice; for Mrs. Featherstone's sea-side drawing-room was as hushed as an empty room until the song was ended.

And then, when the last note of the accompaniment had died quite away—well, for some time afterwards they would not allow Ivy to stir from the piano; but besought her again and again to sing to them "those sweet old bygone songs."

Indeed so many compliments had been heaped upon her, she was feeling quite pleased and excited.

Ivy felt the room growing now intolerably warm and "smoky," and so went over to one of the long windows and stepped out on to the balcony for a breath of the cooler air.

Two or three basket chairs stood there outside, and she sat down in one of them restfully.

Somewhat to her surprise, Mr. Loraine joined her upon the balcony, seating himself heavily in another of the basket-chairs which creaked pitiously beneath his weight.

He drew his seat familiarly towards Ivy's; but said rather awkwardly nevertheless—

"And how do you like Stoke Bay on the whole, Mrs. Dundas? Ever been here before—eh?"

She told Mr. Loraine that she liked Stoke Bay very much on the whole, and that she had never been there before.

Then she stared at her stout companion, and wondered what could be coming next.

After an uncomfortable silence, he said—
"You were taught abroad, madam, I understand!"

Ivy still looked at him wonderingly.
"You mean my musical education?" she answered. "Oh, yes!"

"Humph," commented Mr. Hector Loraine; and slowly rubbed his rather stubbly chin.

Then Ivy yawned as slightly and as politely as she could. But the mild hint was lost upon Mr. Loraine, or he would not see it.

He laid his fat bejewelled hand upon her arm. She withdrew it gently from his touch.

"Now look you here, madam," said the manager at last, in a tone which had all at once grown brisk and business-like. And then he unfolded his plans, and spoke out plainly and to the point.

There was no mistaking or misunderstanding Mr. Hector Loraine now.

Ivy understood him perfectly, and she told him so.

"You mean," she said, in her chilliest manner, "that you would like me to sing for you at your variety theatre in London, and would pay me a substantial weekly salary for so doing? Is that it, Mr. Loraine?"

"You've hit it exactly, Mrs. Dundas," said the manager, boldly. "In you and your voice there is the making of a first-rate—"

Ivy held up her hand. She cut Mr. Loraine short.

"You are too kind," she said, quietly; "but

there is no necessity for anything of the sort. And my answer is—"

"Yes!" put in Mr. Loraine, eagerly.

"Emphatically no," answered Ivy Dundas.

"You decline then, madam?" said the manager, reluctant to take a plain refusal.

"Do you not comprehend me? Most assuredly do I decline."

"Many a woman situated like yourself would jump at the offer," muttered Mr. Loraine, offensively.

Ivy turned upon him with resentment ill-concealed.

"That is exactly it," she said. "Were I situated like other women you would never have dared to speak to me as you have spoken to me to-night. But my prejudices and opinions may be respected, even as other people's."

The manager of the Pagoda laughed coarsely, rose from his creaking basket-chair, and turned to go.

"You may alter your tune one of these days," he said. "Well, you know where I am always to be found. Good-evening, Mrs. Dundas."

"Good-evening, Mr. Loraine."

And then he left her, and Ivy was alone again. Not for long, however; for the flimsy lace-curtains behind her were parted once more, and out stepped Mr. Falconer.

His society after that of her late companion was a thoroughly welcome change; and Ivy frankly admitted it. But she told Keith nothing of Mr. Loraine's curious proposition—she shrank, somehow, from all reference to it.

He took the wicker seat vacated recently by Miss Featherstone's manager, and drifted quietly into talking of music and of books, with many a kindred theme besides in which they both of them felt the same keen sympathy and interest.

The clocks were striking three.

A cold dawn-wind was breathing from the pallid east.

Wan flame-streaks would soon be breaking over the chill grey sea.

A voice shouting close behind them caused Ivy and Keith Falconer to start together and look round.

"Hallo, you two!" cried Ronald Dundas, in the open window. "Perhaps when you have quite done your spooning out there, you'll come home! At all events, I mean my wife to come along home with me. You, Falconer, of course may please yourself. So, Ivy, my dear, just look alive, will you! Can't you see I'm waiting—been waiting this hour or more for you! Come along!"

Trembling and very pale, Ivy went directly to get her hat.

Keith Falconer remained unmoved.

He perceived what Ronald's condition was; and he wisely ignored the insulting remarks that Ronald had made.

"All right, old fellow," he said, rising and stretching himself—"it is latish, I know. I'll come with you."

"Please yourself, old man!" hiccoughed Ronald Dundas. As he spoke, he was steadying himself by the framework of the window. "My society is no attraction for you, I'm well aware. Still, there is my wife. She, I dare say, will be glad of your company, even though I can't appreciate it, don't you know?"

"Be quiet, Dundas—you are talking nonsense," said Keith, sternly.

In the drawing-room, young Papillon and the Earl of Exe were still smoking cigarettes and drinking brandy and soda. Mr. Loraine had vanished. Cynthia was looking at once tired and bored. And Mrs. Featherstone herself, Ivy was shocked to notice, was fast asleep with her mouth open upon the sofa.

As speedily as Ivy could manage their leave-taking, they got away; and Mr. Falconer accompanied her and her husband up to Miss Spicer's house on the heights.

Without Keith's strong aid, Ivy shuddered to think what, in the circumstances, she would have done.

She was helpless and terrified enough as it was. With every lurch and stagger Ronald swore at them both; and told Mr. Falconer that he—Keith himself—was drunk.

At Miss Spicer's door Keith Falconer left them. And if their hands—his and Ivy's—at parting thus, clung most pitifully together, Heaven above them knew that it was no sin of either. His manly chivalrous heart, she felt, was bleeding sorely for her; her own heart, aching very bitterly in this hour, was unspeakably thankful for such real sympathy as his.

What more, alas, could he do for her?

So he and she, in the chilly dawn, said goodbye to each other; and from that sad hour it was many a long day before Ivy Dundas saw Keith Falconer again.

Ronald, with many a curse and stumble, got upstairs somehow.

And Ivy heard a door creak cautiously upon the top landing of all, and felt that Miss Spicer, hearing the commotion, had slipped out of her bed and was peeping at them over the banisters.

Ronald dropped into the first arm-chair he came to; thrust his hands down into his trousers-pockets; stretched his long legs widely apart; and growled out that he wanted a brandy-and-soda—a big one.

And then he swore gutturally at Ivy for being so "infernally slow" in getting what he wanted; though she was in reality obeying him at the moment as fast as her trembling hands would allow her.

When Ronald Dundas was very tipsy then was it that he was most inclined to be quarrelsome.

Having from hard experience learned this fact, Ivy became well aware afterwards that she should have been more wary, more tactful, in dealing with Ronald at such a time as the present—should have waited indeed until he was sober; and for a while, at any rate, should have smothered as best she could the hot indignation which was consuming her, heart and brain.

Had she been wiser, more tolerant and forbearing, more patient in every way, she would have been spared much sorrow and degradation—some almost hopeless suffering in the after days!

But no woman is there living without a spark of temper of her own; and Ivy's, as a rule under thorough control, not an hour before had been cruelly tried.

So at the side-board, in silence, she mixed for Ronald a long tumbler of soda-water and brandy.

And then, holding her head high, and conscious of her own heart-beats, she crossed the room and carried the mixture to him.

With her bosom heaving, with her breath coming short and fast, she stood there before the arm-chair in which he lay sprawling.

"Your conduct to-night has been hateful, Ronald—hateful! You have insulted me intolerably!" said Ivy, recklessly. "And if you were a man with a grain of honourable feeling about you, you would rise this minute, sir, and beg my pardon."

Here was a flinging down of the iron glove with a vengeance!

Before answering in any manner he took the long glass from Ivy's hand, and swallowed half the contents of it at a draught.

It seemed to do him good—to sober him somewhat. His own hand was steadier than Ivy's when he set down the glass upon a small table near him.

It was by this time broadening dawn; in fact, nearly bright day; and the room was full of rose and grey light.

It was too late now to wish that she had given her anger time to cool; at least, wishing could avail her nothing. The vain rash words were uttered—there was no unsetting or recalling them. Heaven help her!

"Humph—so!" said Ronald then, in his most insufferable way. "Beg your pardon, Ivy, did you say—that? Something fresh, that, isn't it? Ha, ha, ha! Besides, why the deuce, pray, should I beg your pardon, Ivy my dear, when I only told you the truth—eh?" hiccoughed he, in the usual tone of the half-sobered tippler.

"What!" Ivy cried, out, aghast.

"Why, only the truth, sweetheart," repeated Ronald, with an insolent laugh. "I said—now didn't I—that you and Keith Falconer were—very spooney together out there upon the balcony at old mother Featherstone's; and so

you were, Ivy, by Heaven, or I never in my life saw a spooning couple. But what is there to fly into a passion about now—eh? Ain't you always at it— spooning with Keith Falconer?"

When Ivy could control her voice, her hands behind her locked convulsively together, she said—and the hoarse words seemed to hurt her as they came—

"That is a lie, Ronald. And you know that it is a lie."

He laughed again in her face.

"Ha, ha, ha! Upon my soul, Ivy, your acting isn't bad, not half bad! But the innocence of the past is just a trifle overdone, my dear; especially with your own husband, you see, who is—well, who is so much behind the scenes, don't you know?"

"Ronald, as I live, I do not understand you!" cried Ivy, passionately, perhaps piteously.

And it was the truth.

She was innocent—innocent in thought, word, and deed—and she did not understand.

However, he soon made her, when he spoke again.

(To be continued.)

A SISTER'S REVENGE.

—30—

CHAPTER XVI.—(continued).

He never forgot the startled, frightened glance that swept over the beautiful face, plainly discernible in the moonlight, nor the quiver of the sweet, tremulous lips as Madge answered:

"I think Heaven must have intended me to live, or it would not have sent you here to save me," she answered, impulsively. "Twice I have been near death, and each time I have been rescued. I never attempted to take my own life but this once. I shall try and accept my fate and live out my weary life."

"Bravely spoken, my noble girl," replied her rescuer, heartily.

"I must go far away from here, though," she continued, shuddering. "I am sorely persecuted here."

The old man listened gravely to her disconnected, incoherent words, drawing but one conclusion from them—"The lover who has cast her off was pursuing the child to despair and death."

"It is my sister who wants a companion," he said. "She lives in the North of Scotland. Do you think you would like to go as far away as that?"

"Yes," said Madge, mechanically. "I should like to go to the furthest end of the world. It does not matter much where I go."

How little she knew where fate was drifting her. Duncan had not told her his home was in Scotland, he meant to tell her that on the morning he was to have met her.

"It will be a long, wearisome journey for you to undertake; still, I feel sure you are brave enough to accomplish it in safety."

"I thank you very much for your confidence in me, sir," said Madge, simply.

"Tut, tut, child!" exclaimed the old man, brusquely. "That innocent little face of yours ought to be a passport to any one's confidence. I don't think there is any doubt but what you will get on famously with Julia—that's my sister, Mrs. Foote—but she's got three daughters that would put an angel's temper on edge. They're my nieces—more's the pity, for they are regular Tartars. Mrs. Foote sent for my daughter Mabel to come down there; but I wouldn't dare send her. There would be a quarrel before twenty-four hours. My Mabel has got a temper of her own. But, phew! I ought not to frighten you, my dear; they could not help but love you."

And thus it was that Madge's fate was unchangeably settled for her.

"There is one thing I would like you to promise me," she said, timidly, "and that is never to divulge my whereabouts to any one who might come in search of me. I must remain for ever dead to the world; I shall never take up the old life again. They must believe me dead."

Argument and persuasion alike were useless; and, sorely troubled at heart, the chemist reluctantly consented. Poor little Madge impulsively caught him by both hands, and gratefully sobbed out her thanks.

The arrangements were soon completed, and before the sun pierced the eastern sky, poor little Madge was whirling rapidly away for the North.

The consternation and excitement which prevailed at the cottage when Madge's absence was discovered can better be imagined than described; or the intense anger of Dalrymple upon finding Madge had eluded him.

"Checkmated!" he cried, white to the very lips. "But she shall not escape me; she shall suffer for this freak. I am not a man to be trifled with. She can not have gone far," he assured himself. "In all probability she has left this place; but if by rail or by water, I can easily recapture my pretty bird. Ah, Madge Meadows!" he muttered, "you cannot fly away from your fate; it will overtake you sooner or later!"

Some hours after Vincent Dalrymple had left the cottage an old man toiled wearily up the graw-grown path.

"Oh, poor little Madge," he said, wiping the tears from his eyes with his old red and white cotton kerchief. "no matter what you have done, I will take you back to my heart—that I will."

He clutched the letter Madame Christine had written him close in his toil-hardened hand. The letter simply told him that Madge had fled from the seminary, and that the writer had every reason to believe she was now in the neighbourhood.

He had received the letter while in London, and at once returned without going to Dalville to acquaint Miss Meadows with the news.

"She shall never be sent off to school again," he commented; "but she shall stop at home. Poor little pet! she was always as happy as the day was long. She shan't have book-learning if she don't want it. I was too hard, I s'pose, with the child in sending her off among those primy city gals, with their flounces and furbelows, with only three plain muslin frocks. The dickens fly away with the book-learnin'! I like her all the better just as she is, bless her dear little heart! I'm here after little Madge Meadows," he said, bowing to the ladies who met him as the door. "I heard she was here—ran away from school, you see, ma'am; but I'll forgive the little gipsy. Tell her that her old Uncle George is here. She'll be powerful glad to see me."

Slowly and gently they broke to him the cruel story—how the dark, handsome stranger had brought her there in the storm and the night, and they could not refuse her shelter; how the gentleman claimed her as his wife; of her illness, and then of her disappearance.

They never forgot the white set face turned toward them. The veins stood out like cords on George Meadows's forehead, and the perspiration rolled down his pallid cheeks in great quivering beads.

This silent heart-reading emotion was more terrible to witness than the most violent paroxysms of grief.

Strangely enough, the ladies had quite forgotten to mention Duncan's visit.

"You don't know how I loved that child!" cried George Meadows, brokenly. "She was all I had to love in the whole world, and I set such store by her! But Dalrymple shall pay dearly for this," he cried, hoarsely. "I shall never rest day or night until my little Madge's honour is avenged! You think she is dead?" he questioned, looking anxiously from one to another.

They only nodded their heads; they could not speak, owing to their sobs.

At that moment several of the neighbours who were assisting in the search were seen coming toward the cottage.

They gathered in a group by the garden wall with a heart heavier than lead in his bosom George Meadows went forward to meet them.

"You haven't got on the track of my little Madge?" he asked despondently.

The men averted their faces.

"For Heaven's sake, speak out, my men!"

he cried, in agony. "I can't stand this suspense."

"There are footprints in the wet grass down yonder," one of them replied; "and they lead straight down to the old shaft. Do you think your girl has made away with herself?"

"A grry, ghastly pallor settled over George Meadows's anguished face."

"The Lord knows! All of you stay here while I go down there and look. If I should find anything there, I'd rather be alone."

There was a depth of agony in the man's voice that touched his hearers, and more than one coat-sleeve was drawn hastily across sympathetic eyes as the men whispered one to another that he would surely find her there.

George Meadows had now reached the very mouth of the pit, and through the branches of the trees the men saw him suddenly spring forward and stoop as if to pick up something; then bitter cries rent the stillness of the summer morning.

"Madge! oh, Madge! my child, my child."

Then they saw him fall heavily to the ground on the very brink of the shaft.

"I guess he's found her," cried the sympathizing men. "Let us go and see."

They found George Meadows insensible, lying prone on his face, grasping in one hand a tiny glove, and in the other a snowy little handkerchief which bore in one corner, worked in fanciful design, the name, "Madge."

CHAPTER XVII.

GLENDAL was one of the most beautiful spots in the north of Scotland. The house—similar to many in the North in style of architecture—stood in the midst of charming grounds which were filled with flowers. To the left of the house was a dense shrubbery, which opened on to a wide carriage-drive leading to the main road. A low stone wall divided it from the beach, which led to the sea.

It was early morning. In an elegant boudoir, whose oriel window overlooked the garden, sat three young ladies, respectively Blanche Bronson, two-and-twenty; Myra Bronson, twenty; and Constance Bronson, eighteen—all dark-eyed, dark-haired, and handsome, yet each of a different temperament.

"I declare, Blanche," cried Myra, indignantly, twisting the telegram she held in her hand into a whip, "it's from Uncle Jasper! Guess what he says!"

"I couldn't possibly," yawns Blanche, from the depths of her easy chair; "it's too much trouble."

"Is it about Maud?" questioned Constance, maliciously.

"Yes," replied Myra; "but you are to try and guess what it is."

"Why, I suppose some stranger has flattered down into the quiet little village of Beechwood, and Maud thinks it her duty to stay there and capture him."

"That isn't it at all," snapped Myra. "Uncle Jasper says Maud cannot come; but he has taken the liberty of sending another young lady in her stead, and hopes Miss Madge Meadows will be the right person in the right place. She will arrive on the twentieth, at nine A.M."

Constance jumped to her feet in actual astonishment, and even Blanche dropped her novel, with widely opened eyes.

"Just fancy some tall, gaunt old maid of a companion with such a name!" she cried, raising her eyebrows and picking up her book again.

"Wouldn't it be fun if she should turn out to be young and pretty, and take the shine off both of you?" laughed Constance, puckering up her mouth. "I would enjoy it immensely!"

"Constance, will you hold your tongue!" commanded Blanche, sharply.

"You'd better hold your temper!" retorted Constance.

"Phaw! what's the use of being so silly as to quarrel over a Miss Nobody!" cried Myra, stamping her pretty slipped foot. "Guess what she is the news."

"Haven't I told you I despise guessing!" cried Blanche, angrily. "It is not good form to insist upon a person's guessing—please remember that."

"Write it down on ice," said Constance, sotto voce, mimicking her elder sister's tone.

"Well," said Myra, with a look of triumph, "I drove over to Mrs. Field's yesterday to see how everything was progressing for that contemplated marriage, and, lo! she informs me the wedding is postponed for the present, and Duncan—handsome Duncan—is coming home alone."

"No-o!" cried both the sisters in chorus.

Blanche sat bolt upright, and Constance danced around the room, clapping her hands.

"I don't think much of a marriage which has been postponed," said Blanche, a bright spot glowing on her cheeks. "Who knows but that one of us may have a chance of winning handsome Duncan Field after all! He is certainly a golden prize."

"Don't count your chickens," etc., quoted Constance, saucily.

"Myra," said Blanche, severely, "you will learn after a while never to speak before Constance. She is liable to do mischief."

"You ought never to go back on your own sex," retorted Constance, banging the door after her as she quitted the room. Snappan, an ugly-looking mastiff, closely following at her heels.

"That is certainly an astonishing piece of news," said Blanche, reflectively, smoothing out the folds of her white cashmere morning-wrapper. "Now, here's a plan for you, Myra. Find out his address in some way, and we will write to him on some pretext or other. Duncan has probably quarrelled with the haughty heiress of Stanton Hall, and one of us ought certainly catch his heart in the rebound. Send him an invitation to your birthday party, Myra."

"I would be more likely to succeed than you, Blanche," said Myra, rocking complacently to and fro, and looking maliciously at her sister. "You remember he once remarked he did not like tall ladies; and you are certainly tall, Blanche."

"Well, I'd rather be tall and willowy and graceful than short and fat and dumpy!" jerked out Blanche, spitefully.

"What! at words' points yet, eh! Ha! ha! ha!" cried Constance, suddenly popping her head in at the door. "I'll be back after a while to see which one of you gets the best of it."

Before either of the sisters had time to reply the family carriage dashed suddenly up to the porch, and a moment later a slight, dark-robed little figure was ushered into their presence.

"This is Miss Meadows, mum," said John, the coachman, addressing the elder sister.

"I'd like to know why you have brought her in here!" cried Blanche, angrily. "Why did you not take her into the servants' hall or into the kitchen?"

But John had disappeared.

"Well, now that you are here, you might sit down," suggested Myra, wondering what kind of face was hid behind the thick, clinging veil. "You may lay aside your bonnet and veil."

Trembling and sick at heart with the cold greeting which had been given her Madge did as she was bid.

"Why, I declare, you are younger than I am!" cried Constance, impulsively. "We were all expecting to see a wrinkled, dried-up old maid. Why, you'd make a much better companion for me than for mother."

"Constance!" cried the elder Miss Bronson, severely, "be kind enough to leave the room."

"I shan't go one step until I have had my say out," cried Constance, planting herself firmly down on a hassock in the middle of the floor.

"Nobody likes me because I'm rude and fre-spoken," declared Constance, addressing Madge; "but I believe in letting people know just what I am, to begin with. I'm not one of those sleek, smooth, tiger creatures that hide their claws under velvet paws. We are three model sisters," she went on, recklessly; "we have tremendous spats—when we are here alone; but if a visitor happens to come in, we all sit with our arms around one another, 'just to have the appearance' of affection, you know."

The elder Miss Bronson arose with dignity, motioning Madge to follow her.

"Papa will see you later, Constance, dear," she said, with a baleful glitter in her shoe-black eyes; and as Madge followed her she could not help but compare her with Lena Stanton, with that treacherous, mocking smile playing about her full, red lips, and quite unconsciously poor little Madge fell to thinking.

"Duncan will go back to Lena Stanton now," she thought, with a bitter sigh. "He has cast me out of his life; he will go back and marry her."

Poor, innocent Madge, how little she knew of life or the insurmountable barrier which lay between the haughty, scheming heiress and Duncan—her husband.

"I was asking you if you resided in Beechwood, Miss Meadows," said Blanche, raising her voice. "I have asked you twice."

"I beg your pardon; please forgive me," said Madge, flushing painfully. "I—I was not aware you had spoken. No, I lived near Beechwood."

Madge was sorely afraid Miss Bronson would ask her to name the exact location. She did not, however, much to Madge's great relief. By this time they had reached the door of Mrs. Bronson's room, and as it was slightly ajar, Blanche pushed it open without further ceremony and entered.

"Has Miss Meadows come yet?" asked a thin, querulous voice.

"Yes," answered Blanche; "here she is, mamma."

The room was so dark Madge could scarcely distinguish the different objects for a moment or so. She saw, however, a dark figure on a couch and a white-jewelled hand waving a fan indolently to and fro. A sudden impulse came over Madge to turn and run away, but by a great effort she controlled her feelings.

"Step forward, if you please, Miss Meadows. I cannot observe you well at such a distance; do not tread on the poodle on the rug or brush against the bric-a-brac placed indiscriminately about the room."

"Oh, dear, if there were only a light," thought Madge, in dismay. She was afraid of taking a single step for fear some of the bric-a-brac mentioned, either at the right or left of her, would come crashing down under her blundering little feet.

"I always exclude the broad glare of early morning light, as I find it especially trying."

As she spoke she threw back one of the shutters with the end of her fan, and a warm flood of invigorating sunshine poured into the room.

"Dear me," she cried, staring hard at the beautiful little face before her. "Why, you are only a child, scarcely older than my Constance. What could that stupid brother of mine mean by sending you to me? I have a notion to send you back again directly."

"Oh, please do not, madame," cried Madge, piteously. "Only try me first; I will do my very best to please you."

"But I did not want a young person," expostulated Mrs. Bronson.

"But you sent for Maud, his daughter, and— and he thought I would do as well," faltered Madge, timidly.

"Maud is over thirty, and you are not more than sixteen, I should judge. How did you happen to think you could do as well as she?"

The colour came and went on Madge's pretty flower-like face, and her heart throbbed pitifully.

"I am not so very wise or learned," she said, "but I should try so hard to please you, if you will only let me."

"I suppose, now that you are here, we will have to make the best of it," replied Mrs. Bronson, condescendingly.

The fair beauty of the young girl's face did not please her.

"I have always dreaded fair women," she thought to herself; "they are the most dangerous of rivals. If she stays at Glendale I shall see she is kept well in the background."

While in the morning-room below the three girls were vigorously discussing the new turn of affairs.

"I am determined she shall not remain here," Blanche Bronson was saying.

"I heartily indorse your opinion," said Myra, slowly.

And for once in her life the tongue of reckless Constance was silent. She looked thoughtfully out of the window.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first week of Madge's stay at Glendale passed quickly. She was beginning to feel quite at home with Mrs. Bronson and Connie, but Blanche and Myra held aloof from her.

She was beginning to believe she never would be able to win her way to their hearts. Constance—warm-hearted, impulsive Connie—took to her at once.

"You are just the kind of a girl I like, Madge," said Connie, twirling one of her soft golden curls caressingly around her finger; "and if I were a handsome young man, instead of a girl, I should fall straightway in love with you. Why, what are you blushing so for?" cried Constance. "Don't you like to talk about love and lovers?"

"No," said Madge, in a low voice, a distressed look creeping into her blue eyes. "If you please, Connie, I'd rather not talk about such things."

"You are certainly a funny girl," said Constance, wonderingly. "Why, do you know, all the handsome young fellows around here have fallen deeply in love with you, and have just been besieging both Blanche and Myra for an introduction to you."

No laughing rejoinder came from Madge's red lips. There was an anxious look in her eyes. Ah! this, then, accounted for the growing coldness with which the two sisters greeted her.

"You do not seem interested enough to even ask who they are," said Constance, disappointedly. "I suppose you have never heard we have some of the handsomest gentlemen around here to be met with in the whole North!" said Connie, enthusiastically. "Wait until you have seen some of them."

How little she knew the girl's heart and soul was bound up in Duncan, whom she told herself she was never again to see.

"Do you see that large grey-stone house yonder, whose turrets are just visible beyond those trees?" asked Constance, suddenly, a mischievous light dancing in her merry hazel eyes.

"Yes," replied Madge. "I have a fine view of it from my window upstairs. I have seen a little child swinging to and fro in a hammock beneath the trees. Poor little thing, she uses a crutch. Is she lame?"

"Yes," replied Connie; "that's little Molly, she's lame. I do not want to talk about her, but about her brother. Oh, he is perfectly splendid!" declared Constance, enthusiastically, "and rich, too. Why, he owns I don't know how many farms, and he is—oh—so handsome! You must take care you do not fall in love with him. All the girls do. If you did not, you would be an exception; you could scarcely help caring for him, he is so winning and nice," said Connie, blushing.

How poor little Madge's heart longed for sympathy and consolation! Oh, if she only dared tell Constance the great hidden sorrow that seemed eating her heart away! She felt that she must unburden her heart to some one, or it must surely break.

"Connie," she said, her little hands closing softly over the restless brown one drumming a tattoo on the window-sill, her head drooping so close to Connie's that her golden curls mingled with her dark locks, "I could never love any one in this world again. I loved once—it was the sweetest, yet the most bitter experience of my life. The same man that spoke tender words to me has cruelly cast me from him. Yet I love him still with all my heart. Do not talk to me of love or lovers, Connie; I cannot bear it. The world will never hold but one face for me, and that is the face of him who is lost to me forever."

"Oh, how delightfully romantic!" cried Connie. "I said to myself over and over again there was some mystery in your life, I have seen such strange shadows in your eyes, and your

voice often has the sound of tears in it. I do wish I could help you in some way," said Constance, thoughtfully. "I'd give the world to set the matter straight for you. What's his name, and where does he live?"

"I cannot tell you," said Madge, shaking her golden curls sadly.

"Oh, dear! then I do not see how I can help you," cried Connie.

"You cannot," replied Madge; "only keep my secret for me."

"I will," she cried, earnestly.

And as they parted Constance resolved in her own mind to bring this truant lover of Madge's back to his old allegiance. But the first and most important step was to discover his name.

Constance went directly to her own room, her brain whirling with a new plan, which she meant to put into execution at once, while Madge strolled on through the grounds, choosing the less frequented paths. She wanted to be alone by herself to have a good cry. Somehow she felt so much better for having made a partial confidante of Constance.

The sun was beginning to sink in the west; still Madge walked on, thinking of Duncan. A little shrill piping voice falling suddenly upon her ears caused her to stop involuntarily.

"Won't you please reach me my hat and crutch! I have dropped them on your side of the fence."

Madge glanced around, wondering in which direction the voice came from.

"I am sitting on the high stone wall; come around on the other side of that big tree and you will see me."

The face that looked down into Madge's almost took her breath away for a single instant; it was so like Duncan's.

A bright, winning, childish face framed in a mass of dark nut-brown curls, and with the brownest of large brown eyes.

"Certainly," said Madge, stooping down with a strange, unexplainable thrill at her heart, and picking up the wide-brimmed sun-hat and crutch, which was unfortunately broken by the fall.

A low cry burst from the child's lips.

"Oh, my crutch is broken," she cried in dismay. "What shall I do? I cannot walk back to the house. I am lame."

"Let me see if I can help you," said Madge, scaling the stone wall with the grace of a fawn.

"Put your arms around my neck," she said, "and cling very tight. I will soon have you down from your high perch; never mind the crutch. I can carry you up to the porch; it is not very far and you are not heavy."

In a very few moments Madge had the child down safely upon terra firma.

"Thank you," said the child. "I know you are tired; we will rest a moment, please, on this fallen log."

The touch of the little girl's hands, the glance of the soft brown eyes, and the tone of her voice seemed to recall every word and glance of Duncan, and hold a strange fascination for her.

"I shall tell my mother and my brother how good you have been to me, and they will thank you too. My name is Molly; please tell me yours."

"My name is Madge Meadows," she answered.

Poor little girl-bride, there had been a time when she had whispered to her heart that her name was Madge Field; but that bright dream was over now; she would never be aught else than—Madge Meadows.

"Is your name really Madge?" cried the little girl in a transport of delight, scarcely catching the last name. "Why that is the name my brother loves best in the world. You have a sweet, sparkling face," said the child, earnestly.

Madge laughed—the only happy laugh that had passed her lips since she had met Duncan that morning under the magnolia-tree.

"My brother has been away for a long time," began Molly. "He came home last night, and I cried myself to sleep. I was so glad. You see," said the child, growing more confidential, and nestling closer to Madge's side, and opening wide her great brown eyes. "I was crying for fear he would bring home a wife, and mamma was crying for fear he wouldn't. I wrote him a letter all by

myself, and begged him not to marry, but come home all alone, and you see he did," cried the child, overjoyed. "But see how late it is growing," cried Molly, starting up in alarm. "I am afraid you cannot carry me up to the porch. If you could only summon a servant, or—or—my brother."

For answer Madge raised the slight burden in her arms with a smile.

"I like you more than I can tell," said Molly, laying her soft, pink, dimpled cheek against Madge's. "Won't you come often to the angle in the stone wall! That is my favourite nook. I like to sit there and watch the white sails glide by over the white-crested waves."

"Yes," said Madge; "I will come every day."

"Some time I may bring my brother with me. You must love him, too, won't you?"

"I should love anyone who had you for a sister," replied Madge, clasping still closer the little figure she held in her arms, adding, in her heart,

"You are so like him."

Molly gave her such a hearty kiss that the veil twined round her hat tumbled about her face like a misty cloud.

"You must put me down while you fix your veil," said Molly; "you cannot see with it so. There are huge stones in the path; you would stumble and fall."

"So I shall," assented Madge, as she placed the child down on the soft, green grass.

At that instant swift, springy footsteps came hurriedly down the path, and a voice which seemed to pierce her very heart, called:

"Molly! little Molly! Where are you?"

"Here, Duncan!" called the child, holding out her arms to him with eager delight. "Come here, Duncan, and carry me; I have broken my crutch."

For one brief instant the world seemed to stand still around poor, hapless Madge, the forsaken girl-bride. The wonder was that she did not die, so great was her intense emotion.

Duncan was standing before her—the handsome, passionate lover who had married her on the impulse of the moment; the man whom she loved with her whole heart, at whose name she trembled; of whom she had made an idol in her girlish heart, and worshipped—the lover who had vowed so earnestly he would shield her for ever from the cold, cruel world—who had sworn eternal constancy, while the faithful gleaming stars watched him from the blue sky overhead.

Yes, it was Duncan! She could not see through the thick, misty veil how pale his face was in the gathering darkness. Oh, Heaven! how her passionate little heart went out to him! How she longed, with a passionate longing words could not tell, to touch his hand or rest her weary head on his breast!

Her brain whirled; she seemed to live ages in those few moments. Should she throw herself on her knees and cry out to him,—

"Oh, Duncan, Duncan, my darling! I am not guilty! Listen to me, my love! Hear my pleading—listen to my prayer! I am more sinned against than sinning. My life has been as pure as an angel's. Take me back to your heart, or I shall die!"

"She has been so good to me, Duncan," whispered Molly, clinging to the veil which covered Madge's face. "I broke my crutch, and she has carried me from the stone wall. Won't you please thank her for me, brother?"

Madge's heart nearly stopped beating. She knew the eventful moment of her life had come, when Duncan, her handsome young husband, turned courteously toward her and extended his hand with a winning smile.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the day following Duncan's return home, and the morning preceding the events narrated in our last chapter, Mrs. Field sat in her dressing-room eagerly awaiting her son. Her eyebrows met in a dark frown, and her jewelled hands were locked tightly together in her lap.

"Duncan is like his father," she mused; "he will not be coerced into this marriage. He is reckless and wilful, yet kind of heart. For long years I have set my heart upon this marriage between Duncan and Lena Stanton. I say again, it must be! Mrs. Field idolized her only son. "He would be a fitting mate for a queen," she told herself. The proud, peerless beauty of the haughty young heiress of Stanton Hall pleased her. "She and no other shall be Duncan's wife," she said.

When Duncan accepted the invitation to visit Stanton Hall she smiled complacently.

"It can end in but one way," she told herself; "Duncan will bring Lena home as his bride."

Quite unknown to him, his elegant home had been undergoing repairs for months.

"There will be nothing wanting for the reception of his bride," she said, viewing the magnificent suites of rooms, which contained every luxury that taste could suggest or money procure.

Then came Duncan's letter, like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, begging her not to mention the subject again, as he could never marry Lena Stanton.

"I shall make a flying trip home," he said, "then I am going abroad."

She did not notice how white and worn her boy's handsome face had grown when she greeted him the night before in the flickering light of the chandelier. She would not speak to him then of the subject uppermost in her mind.

"Retire to your room at once, Duncan," she said; "your journey has wearied you. See, it is past midnight already. I will await you to-morrow morning in my boudoir; we will breakfast there together."

She leaned back against the crimson velvet cushions, tapping her satin-quilted slipper restlessly on the thick velvet carpet, ever and anon glancing at her jewelled watch, wondering what could possibly detain Duncan.

She heard the sound of a quick familiar footstep in the corridor; a moment later Duncan was by her side. As she stooped down to kiss his face she noticed, in the clear morning light, how changed he was. Her jewelled hands lingered on his dark curls and touched his bright, proud face.

"What has come over my handsome, impetuous son?" she asked herself. "You have been ill, Duncan," she said, anxiously, "and you have not told me."

"I have not, indeed, mother," he replied.

"Not ill? Why, my dear boy, your face is haggard and worn, and there are lines upon it that ought not to have been there for years. Duncan," she said, drawing him down on the sofa beside her, and holding his strong white hands tightly clasped in her own, "I do not want to tease you or bring up an unpleasant subject, but I had so hoped, my boy, you would not come home alone. I had hoped and prayed morning and night you would bring home a bride, and that that bride would be—Lena Stanton."

Duncan staggered from her arms with a groan. He meant to tell her the whole truth, but the words seemed to fail him.

"Mother," he said, turning toward her a face white with anguish, "in Heaven's name, never mention love or marriage to me again, or I shall go mad! I shall never bring a bride here."

"He has had a quarrel with Lena," she thought. "Duncan," she said, placing her hands on his shoulders and looking down into his face, "tell me, has Lena Stanton refused you? Tell me what is the matter, Duncan. I am your mother, and I have the right to know. The one dream of my life has been to see Lena your wife. I cannot give up that hope. If it is a quarrel, it can be easily adjusted. True love never runs smooth," she knew.

"It is not that, mother," said Duncan, wearily bowing his head on his hands.

Then something like the truth seemed to dawn upon her.

"My son," she said, in a slight tone of irrita-

tion, "Lena wrote me of that little occurrence at the lawn fête. Surely you are not in love with that girl you were so foolishly attentive to—the overseer's niece, I believe it was. I cannot, I will not, believe a son of mine could so far forget his pride as to indulge in such mad, reckless folly. Remember, Duncan," she cried, in a voice fairly trembling with suppressed rage, "I could never forgive such an act of recklessness. She should never come here, I warn you."

"Mother," said Duncan, raising his head proudly, and meeting the flashing scorn of her eyes undiminished, "you must not speak so; I—cannot listen to it."

"By what right do you forbid me to speak of that girl as I choose?" she demanded, in a voice hard and cold with intense passion.

Once or twice Duncan paced the length of the room, his arms folded upon his breast. Suddenly he stopped before her.

"What is this girl to you?" she asked.

With white, quivering lips Duncan answered back—

"She is my wife!"

The words were spoken almost in a whisper, but they echoed like thunder through the room, and seemed to repeat themselves over and over again during the moment of utter silence that ensued.

Duncan had told his pitiful secret, and felt better already, as if the worst was over; while his mother stood motionless and dumb, glaring upon him with a baleful light in her eyes. He had dashed down in a single instant the hopes she had for long years built up.

"Let me tell you about it, mother," he said, kneeling at her feet. "The worst and bitterest part is yet to come."

"Yes, tell me," his mother said, hoarsely.

Without lifting up his bowed head, or raising his voice, which was strangely sad and low, Duncan told his story—every word of it: how his heart had gone out to the sweet-faced, golden-haired little creature whom he found fast asleep under the blossoming tree in the morning sunshine; how he protected the shrinking, timid little creature from the cruel insults of Lena Stanton; how he persuaded her to marry him, and how they had agreed to meet on the morrow—that morrow on which he found the cottage empty and his child-bride gone; of his search for her, and—oh, cruelest and bitterest of all!—where and with whom he found her; how he had left her lying among the clover, loving her too madly to curse her, yet praying Heaven to strike him dead then and there. Madge—sweet little blue-eyed Madge was false; he never cared to look upon a woman's face again.

He spoke of Madge as his wife over and over again, the name lingering tenderly on his lips. He did not see how, at the mention of the words, "My wife," his mother's face grew more stern and rigid, and she clutched her hands so tightly together that the rings she wore bruised her tender flesh, yet she did not seem to feel the pain.

She saw the terrible glance that leaped into his eyes when he mentioned Dalrymple's name, and how he ground his teeth like one silently breathing a terrible curse. Then his voice fell to a whisper.

"I soon repented of my harshness," he said, "and I went back to Beechwood; but, oh, the pity of it—the pity of it—I was too late! Little Madge, my bride was dead! She had thrown herself down a shaft in a moment of madness. I would have followed her but they held me back. I can scarcely realize it, mother," he cried, "The great wonder is that I do not go insane."

Mrs. Field had heard but one word—"Dead." This girl who had inveigled her handsome son into a low marriage was dead. Duncan was free—free to marry the bride whom she had selected for him. Yet she dared not mention that thought to him now—no, not now; she must wait a little.

No pity lurked in her heart for the poor little girl-bride whom she supposed lying cold and still in death, whom her son so wildly mourned; she only realized that her darling Duncan was freed.

What mattered it to her at what a bitter cost Duncan was free? She should yet see her darling hopes realized. Lena should be his wife just as sure as they both lived.

"I have told you all now, mother," Duncan said, in conclusion. "You must comfort me, for Heaven knows I need all your sympathy. You will forgive me, mother," he said. "You would have loved Madge, too, if you had seen her. I shall always believe, through some villainy, Dalrymple must have tempted her. I shall follow him to the ends of the earth. I shall wring the truth from his lips. I must go away," he cried, "anywhere—anywhere, and try to forget my great sorrow. How am I to bear it? Has Heaven no pity, that I am so sorely tried?"

At that moment little Molly came hobbling into the room, and for a brief moment Duncan forgot his great grief in greeting his little sister.

"Oh, my darling brother, Duncan," she cried, clinging to him and laughing and crying in one breath, "I told them to wake me up sure, if you came in the night. I dreamed I heard your voice. You see, it must have been real, but I couldn't wake up; and this morning I heard everyone saying: 'Duncan is here, Duncan is here,' and I couldn't wait another moment, but I came straight down to you."

Duncan kissed the pretty dimpled face, and the little chubby hands that stroked his hair so tenderly.

"Why you have been crying, Duncan," she cried out in childish wonder. "See, there are tear-drops on your eyelashes—one fell on my hand. What is the matter, brother dear; are you not happy?"

Molly put her two soft white arms around his neck, and laid her cheek close to his in her pretty childish, caressing way.

He tried to laugh lightly, but the laugh had no mirth in it.

"You must run away and play, Molly, and not annoy your brother," said Mrs. Field, disengaging the child's clinging arms from Duncan's neck. "That child is growing altogether too observing of late."

"Child!" cried Molly. "I am ten years old. I shall soon be a young lady like Belle and Gusie, over at Glenside."

"And Connie," suggested Duncan, the shadow of a smile flickering around his mouth.

"No, not like Connie," cried the child, gathering up her crutch and sun hat as she limped towards the door. "Connie is not a young lady, she's a tomboy; she wears short dresses, and chases the hounds around, while the other two wear silk dresses with big, big trains, and have gentlemen to hold their fans and handkerchiefs. I am going to take the new books you sent me down to my old seat on the stone wall, and read those pretty stories there. I don't know if I will be back for lunch or not," she called back; "if I don't, will you come for me, brother Duncan?"

"Yes, dear," he made answer; "of course I will."

The lunch hour came and went; still Molly did not put in an appearance. At last Duncan was beginning to feel uneasy about her.

"You need not be the least alarmed," said Mrs. Field, laughingly; "the child is quite spoiled; she is like a roving gipsy, more content to live out-of-doors in a tent than to remain indoors. She is probably waiting down on the stone wall for you to come for her, and carry her home, as you used to do. You had better go down and see, Duncan; it is growing quite dark."

And Duncan, all unconscious of the strange, invisible thread which fate was weaving so closely about him, quickly made his way through the fast-gathering darkness down the old familiar path which led to the old stone wall, guided by the shrill treble of Molly's childish voice, which he heard in the distance, mingled with the plaintive murmur of the sad sea-waves—those waves that seemed ever murmuring in their song the name of Madge.

Even the subtle breezes seemed to whisper of her presence.

(To be continued.)

A GREAT LONGING.

—30—

(Continued from page 9.)

Oh, my darling! shall I ever forget that night when I held your dear form in my arms as we glided round the great room to the wild, intoxicating strains of the band! and you—you were utterly unconscious of the mad passion that possessed me.

Lady Cranston persuaded Colonel Thornbury to remain at the Towers, for the dawn was not far distant when the party broke up, and Amor's sweet, flower-like face was somewhat pale—she was not accustomed to late hours.

Next morning, when I went out into the garden, I was surprised and pleased to find Amor Thornbury walking under the shade of the trees, and I hurried forward to greet her.

How fair, how exquisitely fair she looked in her simple morning robe of cream-coloured cashmere, with no colour to relieve it, save the bunch of pink geraniums, still wet with dew, which she held in her hands!

"You are an early riser," I observed, taking the slim fingers in my hands. I remember every word we spoke during those brief weeks, the happiest in my life.

"I always rise early. Papa has not forgotten his past military life, and is a very strong advocate of early rising," she answered, in her marvellously sweet tones—tones that lingered on the memory like some soft chord of music.

"Will you have a flower for your coat?" holding out a spray of the geranium with a half shy smile.

"Will you put them in?" I replied quietly, though I longed to ask her for the fairest flower of all—herself.

As she raised her fair hands to place the flower in my button-hole, the loose sleeves fell back from the white, rounded arms that shone like Parian marble against the pale, blue silk lining, and for the first time a faint, pink colour rose to her cheeks as her eyes met mine.

How I longed to press one kiss on those perfect arms, but I restrained myself; that glance thrilled through my being. She might yet be mine—my darling, my wife!

She and her father went away that afternoon, but scarcely a day passed that did not find me at Thornbury Lodge. Sometimes I met Amor out, with her dog Ponto trotting on in front, and we would walk side by side along the hard country roads, and through the fields where the hedges were gemmed with Jack Frost's silvery trail.

One morning about a week before Christmas I was standing looking out into the ground at Cranston Towers, feeling rather impatient at the non-appearance of my host.

It was late, and the postman had long since been, and I hoped fervently that he had brought me a letter from my Uncle Edgar, who had not been well lately.

There was going to be a grand ball at Cranston Towers on Christmas Eve, to which Amor Thornbury was invited, and I earnestly hoped that he was better.

I was looking forward to this evening, for I had determined to ask the question that night, the answer to which would decide my future happiness or woe.

I was fond of my uncle, but as I did not suppose his illness a bad one I was not much troubled on his account, still I knew that he would expect me to run up and see him if his health had not improved.

My younger and only brother Athol was coming down to the Towers for a short time after two years' absence from England, and I was anxious to see him too.

Presently the butler came in with the urn hissing and bubbling, and soon after Lord Cranston entered, and the post-bag being brought, handed me several letters, but not one with the well-known hand-writing of my uncle.

There was one from my father, however; in it he informed me that my uncle was much worse, and that if I wished to see him again I must come at once.

Tom's letter filled me with remorse; my dear old uncle lay dying while I was lamenting the fact that he would expect me to go to see him, and for the moment all thoughts of Amor were banished from my mind.

"I must leave by the next train for London," I said, turning to my hostess, who entered the room at that moment. "You will excuse my haste, for my uncle, Lord Cathland, is not expected to live."

"Most decidedly, my dear boy," she answered, a smile of sympathy lighting up her kindly features; "but I wish it was on a more cheerful errand you were going. How sorry your brother will be; we expect him here to-morrow."

We sat down to breakfast after a little more conversation on the subject of my uncle's illness, but we could scarcely eat a mouthful; and before twelve o'clock I was speeding on my way to London, staring moodily out at the wide stretches of white, frosty fields, with here and there a high hedge or a clump of tall trees.

Now and again as we sped on through the chilly air, we passed clusters of country houses with long gardens, where great bushes of holly grew, seeming to brighten up the almost dreary whiteness with their shining dark green leaves and gleaming scarlet berries.

I did not notice these things at the time, for I was not in the humour to appreciate Nature, but it came back to me in the after-time with distinct vividness—the broad, flat-roofed houses, with tall, red chimneys, from which the smoke rose and curled in fantastic shapes up to the pale sky.

The bright, rosy faces of children who, regardless of cold, stood on the wooden railings and clapped their tiny hands as we passed, and the narrow, placid stream, bordered by giant oaks and other trees, that wound through the country for miles.

On arriving at the terminus I rushed out to where the cabs stood. I had brought no luggage with me and jumping into one was quickly driven to my uncle's house.

I found him very weak but better; and the doctor, who had never once left his side during the illness told me that there was every hope.

My relief can better be imagined than spoken. Who has not at one time experienced the feeling of joy that came over me when I was led into his presence?

My brother came round two or three days after my arrival, and finding our uncle so much improved he decided to precede me to Cranston Towers.

I was Lord Cathland's favourite nephew, and when he begged me to stay I could not refuse.

Next to my father I loved and respected him above all other men, and so Athol went down to the Towers by himself, with many excuses to Lady Cranston from me, but of Amor I spoke no word.

It was long after Christmas when I felt I could leave the dear old boy in safety. He would not be far from us, for he intended spending the winter at his country residence, Cathland Park, some two or three miles from Cranston Towers.

Athol met me at the station. He was something like me. His eyes were deep, dark brown, his hair crisp and curly, and his complexion was bronzed by exposure to a tropical sun, which mine was not, for I was very pale, and my features lacked the winning expression that won for him the admiration of all women.

"So glad to see you again, old fellow!" he said, clapping my hands in a firm grasp. "You are not much changed; the same grave, thoughtful phiz," and he laughed a light, joyous laugh.

"And I, Athol, have been looking forward to this meeting," I answered quietly. Men are never very demonstrative with each other, and we neither of us spoke much, although our hearts were filled with pleasure at being together once again.

He had brought the dog-cart with him, and, jumping up, we were soon bowling alone the hard white road, the fresh, clear air blowing in our faces. He was very silent during the long drive; but as we entered the great iron gate at Cranston Towers, and passed swiftly up the broad

avenue of leafless trees, he turned to me and said—

"I am going across to Colonel Thornbury's this afternoon; will you come?"

"Yes!" I answered; but Athol little knew how the thought of that visit sent the hot blood tingling through my veins.

Lord and Lady Cranston were delighted to see me, for it was a sign that their old friend, Lord Cathland, was better. We four had a very pleasant sociable lunch, and then, in the afternoon, my brother and I started for Thornbury Lodge.

It was a bright fine day for the time of year, and a pale yellow sunlight was resting over the country as we passed in at the high wooden gate, and up the gravel pathway. Colonel Thornbury was not at home, the servant informed us, but Miss Thornbury was in the garden.

And so we told her that we would announce ourselves, and together we went out into the wintry sunlight where Amor was walking up and down the brown pathways, with here and there a patch of hard, dingy snow that the sun had failed to melt. There was a thoughtful expression on the sweet young face, and the eyes, as they turned unconsciously in our direction, had a dreamy light in their purple depths; but as she perceived us coming down the quaint old garden, a bright crimson glow rose to her golden hair, and she advanced towards us with a quick exclamation of surprise.

How my heart throbbed and beat at the sight of her evident confusion! Could it be that during my absence she had learned that I was more to her than all others. What else could be the meaning of the rich colour that suffused her fair features?

"If we had been alone I should have pleaded my cause then, but I had to mask my emotion. I envied my brother his fluent tongue. He seemed able to converse upon any subject, while I stood by, silent and pre-occupied, longing for one moment alone with the one love of my life, and feeling so altogether his inferior. Why was it that I could never speak when in her presence? I asked myself impatiently.

Colonel Thornbury came out into the garden after a time and invited us to stay to tea, and of course we stayed.

I offered Amor my arm as I had on that first night, as we turned to enter the house. I saw Athol glance at us, and again that quick rush of warm blood rose to her face.

She loved me! Of this I felt sure, and soon I would ask her to give herself to me for life.

She looked more fair than ever, I thought, that afternoon.

She was dressed in a loose clinging robe of some rich crimson material, and her sweet face rose above the masses of flimsy lace at her throat like some pure white lily.

We could not stay to dinner, although we should have preferred to, for Lady Cranston was giving a grand dinner party, to which she had invited Lady Clare; this in my honour, and such being the case I at least could not be absent.

If Amor answered my question as I wished—and of that I had little or no doubt—I would say before all the world "this is my future wife," but until then I could only quietly ignore the fact that they were literally stuffing the Lady Clare down my throat.

She herself was a very lady-like, unaffected, modest girl, a girl of whom I could have made a friend; but I always felt in a false position when in her company, and behaved so stiffly that I am sure she thought I disliked her. It is a great pity for relations to interfere in these matters.

The week passed on and spring was approaching but I had found no opportunity of speaking the words that were ever ringing in my brain to sweet Amor Thornbury; but when the loud notes of the cuckoo had been heard in the woods, and the trees were putting forth their first fresh pale green shoots, the time for which I longed came.

Lady Cranston had arranged before leaving for London to have a picnic in Hendleigh Wood, which was situated some five miles from the town.

It was a place of historical note, for there, on

the summit of a grass-grown hill, from which could be seen a distant view of the sea, were the ruins of a grand old castle.

Knights of old had fought upon the thick, strong battlements, and fair ladies had stood at the tiny apertures that did duty for windows, and prayed for the welfare of their gallant lovers.

Amor and her father were coming, and a feeling of unutterable joy filled my heart as I thought that that day should decide my fate. No idea of failure came to me. What did those blushes mean but love?

There were about twenty in all invited, and by ten o'clock the whole party had started.

A hal and I were in one carriage with Amor Thornbury and Jasnet Penrhyn, a nice, affable, pretty girl, with an inexhaustible flow of conversation.

Never shall I forget that drive. The country through which we passed was picturesque, though rather flat; broad stretches of brown fields that would, in a few months, be golden with ripening corn; then green fields in their first freshness, their low hedges overshadowed with tall trees. Now and again there was a house, and through gaps in the hedges an occasional glimpse of the sea.

"I think—is a very pretty and picturesque country, there is so much variety about it. Do not you agree with me, Lord Cranston?" said Amor, in that soft, liquid voice that never failed to thrill my being to the core.

"Yes, it is considered so," I answered; and Miss Penrhyn, who had been silent a few moments joining in, the conversation became general.

We very soon arrived at our destination, a small wood at the foot of a hill, at the top of which stood the crumbling ruins of Hendleigh Castle, grand even in its last decay.

We all wandered about the wood, gathering cowslips, primroses, and violets, and chatting merrily together until we were called to lunch.

The meal passed off as such meals generally do. There was the usual laughing and joking, and the little mishaps that invariably occur at pic-nics, and then the party broke up and went off in couples in different directions.

I managed to secure Amor before anyone had observed us, and turned my steps in the direction of the ruins.

She was very silent, and I did not feel in the humour for conversation, so we walked on in perfect silence till we reached the courtyard.

There was an archway covered with ivy that led to a small arbour at the left of us as we clambered over what had once been the outer wall—the stronghold, in fact, of the ancient ruin.

I pushed aside the heavy veil of ivy, and pointing to a square, flat stone I invited Amor to a seat. Resting my hand on the sunken wall I gazed up at the sky, which had turned to a dull brownish grey, as if for inspiration.

My heart was too full for speech at this moment, although I had brought sweet, innocent Amor to this lonely spot to tell my tale of love.

After a time she rose and came to my side and so we two stood together in the soft stillness of the afternoon, watching the birds that flew busily in and out of the thick mantle of ivy that covered one side of the ruins. Presently she turned her large eyes inquiringly upon me.

"Why are you so silent?" she asked, in her clear, distinct voice.

Then her eyes wandered dreamily to the foot of the hill, where tall, dark pines reared their heads to the sky and so far out to the rugged cliffs, above which the sea seemed to surge and rise.

"I always manage to make myself stupid when in your company," I remarked rather bitterly; but I stopped suddenly, for she was gazing at me in surprise.

"Stupid!" she replied, "I have never found you other than a very pleasant companion. You underrate yourself," and she turned again to the grand, though rather dreary, scene that lay stretched before our eyes.

A pale, watery mist was creeping up over the cliffs, and a shiver went through me. The whole place was changed since we arrived in the

early morning, and there was every sign of a storm.

"Amor!" I said, and my voice did not sound to me like my own, but I was desperate, and so I went on going a step nearer the tall, lithe, blue-robed figure, and taking her hand in my own. "Amor, do you think that you could—"

I never finished that sentence, for the sound of hurrying footsteps broke upon the heavy, brooding stillness of the air, and I instinctively stepped back.

The intruder was very close, I was standing against the old oak, and the thick leaves of the ivy completely hid me from the sight of anyone entering the arbour, but I could see every line of the faultless figure and sweet calm face of Amor Thornbury.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," cried a familiar voice, that of my brother Athol, and I started at the glad ring of joy in its winning tones.

Before Amor could answer he was at her side, that tender, almost womanly, smile I knew so well lighting up his dark, handsome face; but what was it I saw that turned my heart to stone and caused that choking sensation in my throat?

Only a swift glance from a pair of star-bright eyes into a man's face, and a delicate crimsoning of a maiden's pearly skin, but I prayed as I gazed that I might die as I stood there, unseen and alone.

Yes, alone, for those two standing there, heart speaking to heart, were utterly unconscious of my presence.

I had dreamt my dream, that was the awakening.

The grey mist that had risen above the land was not more dark and drear than my life would henceforth be.

"Oh, Amor, my darling, my pure love!" I cried, in my agony, "would that it might have been I!" and then, drawing myself together, I slipped unheeded from my abelter, and passed silently down the hill, sometimes stumbling over the bricks that had fallen from the crumbling walls, sometimes stooping to pluck a pale primrose from its bed in the tender young grass.

The rest of the party were all gathered together under the shade of some wide-spreading chestnuts when I came upon them, discussing the advisability of returning home.

I was soon engaged in lively conversation with Miss Penrhyn, and when my brother and Amor joined us I was the gayest of the little group. In fact, Athol glanced at me more than once in surprise. He was not used to seeing me give way to such wild spirits.

As we took our places in the carriages the storm broke with full force. A deep rolling peal of thunder rumbled over our heads, then a swift flash of purple struck across the sky, nearly blinding us, and on rolled the carriages through the country roads and lanes, where the birds were hopping about in the glistening hedges, tiny drops of rain resting on their brown wings like spots of crystal.

It was soon over, and as we passed through the village a pale gleam of sunshine fell from the sky, and lingered on the fair face and golden head of Amor Thornbury, who was lying back on the cushions, an expression of perfect happiness hovering round her coral lips.

"Have you enjoyed yourself?" I asked, bending forward and looking fixedly into the clear, pure depths of her violet eyes. I had no motive in asking the question, except that I longed to hear the soft thrilling tones of her voice.

"Yes, I have indeed!" she answered, with a smile, and a pretty shy blush tinged her cheeks, as she flashed a fleeting glance at the bright, handsome face of my younger brother.

I knew what that look meant, and my heart throbbed with pain, and I felt that my face grew pale. It was a hard fight, strong man as I was, to control my feelings, for I could have cried aloud in my agony. I had often heard that when a man gets to the age of two or three-and-thirty, without ever having loved, the love that comes to him then is deeper, more passionate, more lasting. "I shall never love," I boasted in my

weak, boyish arrogance; but I felt the truth of the saying then. "I knew that life no longer had any charm for me; still I could not regret that I had loved."

The sun was setting when we entered the massive gates at the entrance of Cranston Park; but great drops of rain were still dripping from the dark pines and pale chestnuts, flashing and sparkling in the watery pink glow that overshadowed the country, as they fell.

After Colonel Thornbury and his daughter had departed—the latter with shy, tremulous drooping of the white, blue-veined eyelids and maidenly bu-bes, as Athol whispered some words into her shell-like ear—my brother came out on to the terrace, where I was doing battle with this my first and last love.

He was rather agitated and nervous. I could see that by the light of the stars. There was no moon; only the cold, bright, twinkling stars shining up in the cloud-flecked sky witnessed that interview. I knew what was coming, and braced myself to meet it with calmness.

"Douglas, old fellow!" he said, lighting a cigar and then putting it out again in his excitement, "I have something to tell you. Perhaps you have noticed—" He paused at a loss for words.

Athol was my only brother, and I loved him dearly. No thought of being jealous entered my mind. It was not his fault that he had won the prize I had cast for. It was the way of life; one man's success is generally another's downfall.

"I know what you want to say, Athol," I replied, putting my hand on his shoulder, and his bronzed face flushed.

"What do you think the pater will say?" he asked, in a quick, eager whisper.

This was a difficult question to answer, for I felt sure in my own heart that my father and mother both had very different views for Athol than a marriage with the daughter of a poor colonel, however lovely and accomplished that girl might be; but I would not speak a word of this to him. I could not damp his spirits on this, the first night of his betrothal.

"Oh, I dare say they will make the best of it," I said, in an off-hand manner. "You see, the girls married to please them, and you will marry to please yourself!"

He looked so handsome as he stood on the terrace with his head erect and that happy light in his dark eyes.

"Douglas," he said, turning to me suddenly, "I am a coward, I know, but will you go to them for me?"

The feathery branches of some tall larches that overshadowed this end of the terrace waved and fluttered above our heads, and it seemed to my excited fancy, as I struggled for mastery over myself ere I answered his question, that the wind that rustled the quivering leaves and lifted Athol's rich dark curls from his broad forehead whispered to my aching heart, "it is for her happiness too!"

As I put out my hand to him a feeling of dizziness came over me, and I caught at the stone balustrade to steady myself; but Athol was not too absorbed in his love-dream to notice me, and he came a step nearer, laying his hand on mine as he did so.

"I will do what you ask, Athol," I muttered, in a choking voice, for the words would scarcely come.

"You are not well, old fellow! Why, your face is ghastly, and your hands clammy cold!" he cried out. "Douglas, what a brute I am not to have seen before how ill you look!" remorsefully.

"Nonsense, I am well enough. My phiz does not show to advantage in the pale starlight!" I said, with a miserable attempt at a laugh. "Now, Athol, good night. I shall stay out here a little longer. You know I have my speech to think over."

We shook hands warmly, and I stood staring after his strong, well-knit figure, as he strode along the broad stone terrace with the careless easy step that betokens a happy heart.

There was a great vase filled with the fragrant wax-like narcissus near me; and the

sweet, subtle perfume brought back a day when I and Amor had walked up and down the leaf-strewn paths of the quaintly laid-out garden of Thornbury Lodge, discussing our favourite flowers.

"Of all flowers I love the narcissus," she had said, "for I think its scent is more exquisite than that of any other."

"Amor! Amor!" I murmured, taking one of the fragile blossoms tenderly in my hands and pressing it to my lips. "It is almost too much to ask me to plead for your union with another, even though that other be my own brother."

And, again, the wind seemed to whisper softly through the trees—"It is for her happiness."

I cannot remember how long I paced up and down that terrace, fighting with, and trying to kill, my unhappy passion for sweet Amor; but the stars had disappeared from the sky, and the whispering breeze of early dawn, fraught with the odour of new mown hay, was blowing on my face, which I knew must look haggard and worn from my recent fight with my love, when I turned, and bending over the vase of narcissus, whispered, "Amor, your happiness shall be my only thought!"

Two or three days afterwards I set off for London, and on arriving at our house in Grosvenor-square I at once sought my father, who, I was informed, was busy writing letters in the library.

He rose as I entered the room, and pushed his chair away from the table.

"Glad to see you, my boy," he said, a smile lighting up his handsome old face, a smile that chased away the stern expression that rested on his features when in repose; "but I understood that you were to stay at Cranston Towers till the end of the month!"

"Yes, sir," I replied, "but I have come up to ask a very important question. Will you give your consent to Athol's marriage with Miss Amor Thornbury?"

I had intended making a very different speech to this; but it came out abruptly, as most disagreeable things generally do, and I felt infinitely relieved when the words were spoken.

"To Athol's marriage with Miss Thornbury!" he repeated. "I do not remember ever seeing Miss Thornbury, Douglas."

"I dare say not, sir," I said. "She lives near Cranston Towers, and is the only child of Colonel Thornbury, late of the—. She is a sweet, lovely, ladylike girl, and highly accomplished"—this in desperation, for I could see a hard, inflexible look stealing round my father's mouth.

"Sweet, lovely, and highly accomplished!" he said, with a half smile. "I wonder, Douglas, that you did not secure this paragon for yourself."

He was too much occupied with his own thoughts to observe the grey pallor that overspread my face as he spoke those sarcastic words, but as I was standing opposite the chimney-glass I had a full view of myself.

"And pray," he went on, "what dowry has this lovely young lady?"

"None!" I answered, rather hotly. I felt disgusted with my father's candid remarks; and the sweet fair face of Amor Thornbury, as I had seen it on that autumn day, with the perfume of the dying roses hovering round her golden head, rose before me in all its calm, girlish purity. "None, sir, save her dowry of pure womanhood!"

"Indeed! and you think that I am going to give my consent to this foolish marriage?" he replied, his brows contracting over his steel-grey eyes. "The daughter of a retired colonel, who has nothing to depend upon but his pension. I see nothing, absolutely nothing to warrant me in doing so!"

"You have not seen her, father," I said, eagerly, and I drew from my breast coat-pocket a photograph of Amor. Athol gave it to me as I said good-bye at the railway station. "Is not this a face to inspire love in any man?"

My father took it from me with that cynical smile still lingering round his mouth, but I saw

it vanished slowly as he gazed into those innocent-pictured eyes.

The opening of the door at that moment made me turn, and I saw my mother standing in the doorway.

"Mother!" I cried, going towards her, and kissing her fair comely cheeks, "is not—what do you think of this face?" She came over to my father's side, and he held the photograph out to her without a word.

"It is perfect, my son," was her answer, and there was something in the expression of her mild blue eyes that reminded me of Amor.

"Have you chosen a wife at last, Douglas?"

"No, mother, but Athol has!" I answered. "I shall never marry, father!" I pleaded earnestly, turning again to him. "Did you not marry for love? and surely Athol has enough for both."

I felt nearly sure of success now that my mother had expressed approval of Amor's face. She could scarcely speak of her want of fortune now; besides, there was a tender light in her eyes as she once more perused the lovely smiling face of my brother's love.

"Althea," said my father; "our son Athol has sent Douglas as his ambassador. He wishes for our consent to his marriage with this young lady—"

"If you will pardon me for interrupting you, sir," I cried, quickly, "I will explain," and in a few words as was possible I told the story of Athol's love.

I knew I had told my story well by their faces, for my father's brow had cleared, and my mother's eyes were moist.

I spoke no word of my own heartache—no one shall ever know that I loved my brother's wife.

"Douglas," my mother's voice quivered, "we will go down to Cathland Park—Edgar will be pleased—and see for ourselves. We will ask her to come and stay with us at the Park for a few days. What do you think, Dennis?" turning to my father with the winning smile Athol had inherited.

"It shall be as you wish," he replied, calmly; and I knew that Athol's cause was won.

We did not stay long in London after that interview.

My father and mother went over to Thornbury Lodge the day after their arrival at Cathland Park.

I could not bear to witness the meeting, but when they came back I heard that the colonel and his daughter were both coming to stay a week at the Park, and I nerved myself to meet her with calmness.

She came in the afternoon of the next day. I was walking on the lawn with my uncle, who was still far from strong, leaning on my arm, and when I saw her coming down the gravel path, beside my mother, her sweet flower-like face aglow with shy joy, my heart stood still.

Oh, Heaven! why was it given to man to love like this? I asked myself, passionately; but I greeted her quietly, nor did I betray any emotion when my mother took one of Amor's slim hands and placed it in my uncle Edgar's.

"Edgar," she said, this is our new daughter and your niece."

He was pleased, for he had met Amor several times during the spring, and had taken a great fancy to her, and he drew her towards him and pressed a kiss on her soft cheek.

Presently the sound of voices came to us as we four stood under the shade of an old elm, and looking up, I saw Athol.

My father and the colonel came out into the broad, white steps of the terrace. Amor's fair face flushed and paled, and the white lids drooped beneath Athol's passionate glance as he joined us.

He scooped her off down the wide pathway where the air was filled with the fragrance of the jessamine, pink and mignonette; and the branches of the ancient trees waved to and fro in the gentle breeze that whispered a tale of young love to their rustling leaves.

I followed them with my eyes until they disappeared from sight behind a great bush of lilacs. How happy they were!

"What are you going to do with yourself, my boy?" asked my uncle, placing his hand on my shoulder, as we stood on the balcony of the smoking-room that night, having a parting cigar before retiring.

"I am thinking of going to Italy," I said carefully; but Athol glanced quickly into my face as he answered rather wistfully,—

"You have not been looking well for some time, Douglas, and I think a change would do you good, but I should like you to stay for the wedding."

"I am sorry, Athol, but I cannot. I really feel as if I shall be ill in earnest if I stay much longer in England," and he, seeing that I was determined, asked no more questions.

I think Uncle Edgar guessed that something was wrong, for he said no word to detain me, and soon after we retired to our rooms.

My father and mother tried to persuade me to stay; but I stood firm, and the following month saw me wandering aimlessly through the picture-galleries of Rome, staring at the works of the old masters with eyes that saw not, for go where I would the sweet face of Amor was ever before me.

"They sin who tell us love can die," says Southey, and I know the truth of his words.

I have been leading this listless, useless life for more than two years now, and my face still pales when I see her dear name in my letters from home, and my heart still beats and throbs wildly when I think of those walks we two took together in that glad autumn time when I thought in my fond madness that my love was returned, and the sight of the trees, when their leaves are tinged with red, gold and brown, recalls the past with bitter distinctness.

They tell me I have a little nephew, and beg me to come home—I cannot.

Perhaps the time will come when I can greet Amor with the calmness of a brother. That time, I feel by the quickening of my pulse as I write, is far, far distant; but some day, when I grow tired of this wandering life, I will go back to see the little child whom they have named Douglas, and the fair lovely face of her who was my only love.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

WHAT is the difference between a bill and a pill?—One's hard to get up, and the other's hard to get down.

"I see the people have unearthed another anarchist." "So! How did they do it?" "Gave him a bath."

CONTRIBUTOR: "Tell me candidly, is there anything original in that manuscript?" The Editor: "Yes, the spelling."

MR. GAILY: "You know man proposes—" Miss Walldong: "No, I don't; I've only heard that he does; I've had no practical experience."

How to make the new dress: Take the material for two skirts and make the sleeves, then take the material for one sleeve and make the skirt.

"Some people," remarked the cannibal chief, as he passed his plate for a second supply, "have a mission in life, while others only have a missionary."

GOMER: "I say, was it you who recommended that cook to my wife?" PEREZ: "I believe so." "Then I should like you to come and have supper with us to-night."

MICAWBER: "There was one thing I could buy as cheap at our seaside resort as I could at home." Copperfield: "What in the world was it?" Micawber: "Postage-stamps."

"THE main problems of this day, sir, are easily solved," he began in a confident tone; "I, myself—" "Ah, yes!" said the grey-haired stranger; "of course, of course. You were graduated this month, I suppose?" "Why, yes. How did you guess?" "I know the symptoms."

WILLIE: "You'll have to wait some time yet. Sister has only got on her bonnet." Featherstone (who has invited her to go to the play, and is anxiously waiting): "Why, what else has she to do?" Willie: "She's got to look in the glass."

DAUBER (struggling artist): "What do you suppose the poet meant by the words, 'Art is long, but life is fleeting'?" Frank Friend (examining Dauber's last picture): "Very likely the poet meant that life is too short for some folks to learn to paint."

"It's hard to tell just what the public wants," said the theatrical manager, with a sigh. "It hasn't struck me that way," replied the box-office clerk. "It seems painfully easy to me. In nine cases out of ten it wants its money back."

COBWIGGER: "There's a chance that you might recover the watch if you remember the number of it." Mrs. Cobwigger: "Oh, is that so, dear? I once wrote the number down on a little bit of paper as you suggested." "Where did you put it?" "Why, in the back of the watch."

LAWYER: "Your case would have been stronger, Mr. McGuire, if you had acted only on the defensive. But you struck first. If you had let him strike you first you would have had the law on your side." Mr. McGuire: "Yes, O'd had had th' law on my side, but O'd 'a' had him on my stomach a pounding th' loife out av me."

ON THE SEASIDE HONEYMOON.—BRIDE: "Wretch: you deceived me! Before you married me I asked you what you were worth, and you said 'at least a million.' Now I find you worthless." BRIDEGROOM: "Yes; but I meant that I was worth at least a million—other fellows of my set—not dollars."

"WHAT'S the matter?" asked the good-natured policeman. "Haven't you any place to go to?" "Any place ter go!" replied Meandering Mike, the tramp, with contempt. "I've got the whole of Great Britain before me. I've got so many places ter go to that it's worryin' me dotty makin' up my which way ter start."

"HERE," complained the aggrieved father, "I have spent nearly £5,000 on that girl's education, and now she goes and marries a young fellow with an income of only £250 a year." "Well," said the friend of the family; "isn't that 5 per cent. on your investment? What more can you expect in these dull times?"

PROFESSOR LONGHAIR: "Well, my young friend, you wished to know what theosophy was, and I wrote you a full and complete explanation. Did you receive it?" Truth Seeker: "Yes, sir, I have it in my pocket. I was just looking for you." Professor Longhair: "Ah!" Truth Seeker: "Yes. I wished to ask if you would not kindly explain the explanation."

A READINESS to apologise for an offence is not worth much unless it is accompanied by a disposition not to repeat the injury. Johnny and Jenny were quarrelling, and Jenny began to cry. "Oh, well," said Johnny, "don't cry, I'll take back all the mean things I've said." "Yes, you'll take 'em back," sobbed the girl, "so you can have 'em just ready to use over again!"

RUSTIC theology often contains much common sense, though not always in accord with the canons. A clergyman came to preach in a southern parish, and while walking across the fields met a farm labourer, who, in the course of conversation, said he was a 'Piscopalian. The clergyman was glad to hear it, and asked if he belonged to the parish; to which the labourer answered that he "didn't know." "Then what diocese do you belong to?" was the next question. "Thee's ain't nathin' like that round here," replied the other. "Who confirmed you, then?" "No-body," answered the labourer. "Then you are not an episcopalian!" asked the clergyman. "Well," was the reply, "you see it's this way: Last winter I was a visitin' a friend, and while I was there I went to church, and it was called 'Piscopalian, and I heard them say that they 'left undone the things what they'd oughter done, and they'd done some things what they oughten done,' and I says to myself, says I, 'That's my fix, exactly!' and ever since I considered myself a 'Piscopalian.'"

SOCIETY.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG have accepted an invitation to stay with Lord and Lady Bredalbane at beautiful Thymouth Castle in the latter part of this month.

THERE is little doubt that if an anxiously-expected event in the Russian Imperial household has a happy termination the Tsar and Tsarina will pay a formal visit to England in the spring, and be the guests of the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

PRINCE ARTHUR of Connaught, who stayed with his grandmother, the Queen, at Balmoral for his holidays, has returned to school at Farnborough and resumed his studies. He is destined to follow the profession of his father, and though only twelve years old Prince Arthur is very keen on military matters.

THE Duke and Duchess of Coburg will, if nothing unforeseen occurs, again entertain largely at Clarence House in June, and amongst their guests will be their then newly-married daughter and her husband, the Hereditary Prince Hohenzollern-Langenburg, as Princess Alexandra and her fiancé are to be married at Coburg in April, during the Queen's continental holiday next spring. Her Majesty having expressed her desire to be present at the wedding of her bright little granddaughter.

IN a very short time the anniversary of the late Czar's decease will have come round, and all the members of his numerous family have already been invited to a grand Requiem Mass to take place on the first of November, at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul at St. Petersburg, in presence of the Court and all the bigwigs, diplomatic, civil and military. The army will go into mourning for the day, public establishments will be closed, and every kind of festivity suspended in Russia.

THE German Emperor is to entertain a large hunting party at the Jagd Schloss of Springe, in Haver, and has invited the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Coburg, the King of Saxony, the Grand Duke of Hesse, the Duke of Connaught, Prince Henry of Prussia, and the Prince Regent of Brunswick, to be his guests. The vast beech and oak forests of Springe afford the best wild boar shooting in Northern Germany. There are only two days' sport every year, and upwards of three hundred wild boars are usually killed by eighteen or twenty guns.

QUEEN WILHELMINA OF HOLLAND, who entered her sixteenth year on August 31st, now wears her hair turned up—or "opgestoken," as the Dutch say—in a shining coil, and arranged most becomingly above her forehead in slightly less formal style than the straight fringe of a short wig. The result is very attractive, and her subjects, who take the warmest interest in her personal appearance and adornment, universally agree that the change is a great improvement. If Court gossip does not err, Prince Karl, second son of the Crown Prince and Princess of Denmark, is regarded as the future Consort of Queen Wilhelmina, but the betrothal will not take place until her sixteenth birthday.

ALL the Saxe-Coburg family are very early risers, and not a moment of the day is unemployed, a regular routine being strictly adhered to, and an amount of time devoted to earnest study which would dismay most young ladies of lesser rank. Although the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg's daughters have all been brought out so very young, and have been accustomed almost from infancy to appear so much in public, they have been kept to the "school-room" all the same, and have acquired a love of work and that dislike to being unemployed which is so characteristic of their mother. Plans are already on foot amongst the townspeople to celebrate the occasion of the forthcoming marriage with due honour and rejoicing, and several ladies' committees have been formed to consult upon the important subject of wedding-gifts, all concerned wishing to outvie each other in the choice of some offering which will be acceptable to their Princess.

STATISTICS.

AN average of 1,000 pigs are eaten in London daily.

MORE than 60,000 stamps are said to be found every year loose in the letter-boxes of the United Kingdom.

THE average cost of maintaining a prisoner in one of our convict establishments is about £25 per annum. This large amount is not expended upon food and clothing so much as upon the salaries of the officers required to keep him in order.

THE notion that the Sahara Desert is altogether a barren and worthless waste is wide of the truth. In 1892 there were nine millions of sheep in the Algerian Sahara alone, besides two million goats and 260,000 camels. On the oases there are 1,500,000 date palms, giving dates worth £600,000 a year. So even the desert is worth keeping under control.

GEMS.

THE talent of success is nothing more than doing what you can well, without a thought of fame.

THE only way to regulate the world is to do the duty that lies nearest to us, and not to hunt after grand ones for ourselves. If each drop of rain chose where it should fall God's showers would not fall as they do now.

TO believe your own thought, to believe what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the customer, and our first thought is rendered back to us by trumpets of the best judgment.

—BY the instrumentality of literature the mind may roam in search of nourishment over the whole world, while stern duty chains the jaded body to the mechanical duties of the home routine. Unfortunately, however, it is the tendency of the former to linger behind in company with the latter. Without frequent friction with the outside world both the outward and inward polish of an individual grows dull.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

ORANGE SAUCE.—Mix together one cup sugar, one heaping tablespoonful flour, and add gradually one pint boiling water; cook from three to five minutes, till it thickens, stirring all the time. Add one tablespoonful butter, and one teaspoonful orange extract. A tablespoonful of vinegar can be added if more acid be liked.

A Dainty Dessert.—Cover one-half box of gelatine with half a cup of cold water; soak ten minutes. Press juice from five large oranges; add one cup of powdered sugar, stir until dissolved. Whip one pint of cream; put the orange juice in pan and stand it in another pan of cracked ice. Stir the gelatine over hot water until dissolved; add to it the orange juice; stir constantly, and just as soon as it begins to congeal stir in the whipped cream. Turn into a mould and put in a cold place to harden.

DAMSON CHERRY.—In a pan of cold water over the fire place an earthen jar, and put into it the sound damsons; bring to a boil and replenish the water as it evaporates till the fruit is soft. Remove the damsons, and while still warm skin and stone them, passing the pulp through a sieve into the juice in the jar. For each pound of this pulp add a half pound of loaf sugar, broken small, and boil to a thick paste. Crack the stones from the fruit, remove the kernels, blanch them and add them to the cheese. Continue the boiling till the pulp clings to the spoon in a mass; then pour into pots and cover, keeping in a dry place.

MISCELLANEOUS.

IN Paris the demand for small dogs is met by rearing pups on an alcoholic diet, which retards their growth.

TOBACCO seeds are so minute that it is said a thimbleful will furnish enough plants for an acre of ground.

THE bicycle of the Khedive of Egypt is a gorgeous machine, almost entirely covered with silver plating.

A GREAT photographic camera for taking full-length life-size portraits has been made and used with much success by a Dublin firm. The camera takes a plate seven feet high and five feet wide.

No one can tell where the diamond goes in combustion. Burn it, and it leaves no ash; the flame is exterior, like that of a cork, and when it has blazed itself out there remains not even so much as would dust the antennae of a butterfly.

It is not generally known that, size for size, a thread of spider silk is decidedly tougher than a bar of steel. An ordinary thread will bear a weight of three grains. This is just about 50 per cent. stronger than a steel thread of the same thickness.

By means of a recent invention the blind are enabled to write with facility, using the ordinary Roman alphabet. The invention is described as a hinged metal plate with square perforations arranged in parallel lines, inside of which the stylus is moved in making the letters.

THE most costly war, viewed from the standpoint of yearly expenditure, was the United States Civil War, on which the expenditure was at the rate of 850 millions per annum. The Franco-German War (1870-71) stands next highest, its cost having been at the rate of 316 millions per annum.

ACCORDING to the trials of carrier pigeons recently made in the American Navy these birds are likely to prove very useful at sea in carrying despatches. Only 10 per cent. of the pigeons sent off failed to return "home," and some of the "homers" covered two hundred miles of ocean at a speed of thirty miles an hour.

THIEVES are using a contrivance looking like an ordinary walking-stick, but which is so arranged that, by pressing a spring at the handle the ferrule will spread apart and form a sort of spring clip that will take hold of anything that is within reach. The thing is called "the Continental lifting-stick," and is used to take goods from behind counters when the shopman's back is turned.

THE removal of objectionable articles or items from foreign periodicals in Russia is accomplished in two ways. If they are long and bulky they are torn or cut out bodily. If they are brief they are blacked out by means of a rectangular stamp which has about the width of an ordinary newspaper column, and which is "cross-hatched" in such a way that when inked and pressed upon the paper it makes a close network of white lines and black diamonds.

WALKING STICKS are being turned to novel purposes by an inventive manufacturer. From one a silk umbrella emerges, and, screwed into the handle, answers every purpose; in another a dozen pennies are stowed away; another contains a measure for the height of horses, with a spirit level attached; while another, with a crystal handle, shows the face of a watch, which tells the time perfectly. Raising the lid, it is easily wound up as required, and the crystal shows the hands distinctly.

IT is a point in the comparative anatomy of cats worthy of remark that the slit-like pupil does not exist in the larger species of the tribe. The lynx has it, but no cat-like animal of much larger dimensions. It has been stated that the pupil of a cat's eye is so perceptive of variations in the intensity of light—contracts and expands so regularly—that a Chinaman will tell you what the time is, or whereabouts, not by looking at a watch or clock, as we would do, but by looking into the eye of a cat.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

QSO.—Kimberley is in South Africa.

A SUFFERER.—You should see an oculist.

MARY.—The 10th of April, 1874, fell on a Friday.

DISHEASED ONE.—Very sorry, but we cannot help you.

MEMO.—The shorter and more business-like your application is the better.

QAR.—In Hawaii, Sandwich Islands, there is an enormous rock that bears this name.

PURPLED FLO.—If he is in earnest he will not leave her long in doubt as to his intentions.

WATER.—The only cure for it is frequent washing of the head with water containing a little borax.

MYTH.—The incident on which this story is founded is very old, dating back to Egyptian literature.

TRIALS.—Actors and actresses, in this country, have no protection against the dishonesty of a manager.

SINKER.—Scales for weighing diamonds are so accurately poised that an eyelash will turn the balance.

AINEN.—Give them a coat of oak spirit varnish. It is easily applied and gives the desired stain and polish.

QSO.—You must exercise your inventive genius if you are to get anything cheaper than it is to be fairly good.

FAIR READER.—A needle will generally be found a sufficient surgical instrument with which to extract a splinter.

CIVIL.—No civilian may wear the uniform of any British regiment in the streets of any town in the United Kingdom.

A MARTYR.—Burnings, if not of long standing, may be cured by applying iodine freely two or three times a day with a feather.

LANGUANT.—The five principal languages, in the order of their importance, are English, German, French, Spanish, and Italian.

EVA.—We are not aware of any means by which hair on the face can be destroyed with safety except by use of the electric needle.

B. P.—No place in United Kingdom for receiving recruits for Cape mounted police; the corps is exclusively recruited in the colonies.

LEE.—A seal is not absolutely necessary on a will, but it may be used, and often is, for the purpose of showing that it was made deliberately and on reflection.

ONE IN DESPAIR.—A skin which will not produce hair under the influence of the razor is absolutely blank as far as hair cells are concerned, and beyond influence of any kind of treatment.

AN OLD READER.—The best way to ascertain whether coffee has been adulterated is to pour cold water on it. If pure, it will colour the water very slightly; if mixed with chicory, the water will take a brownish hue.

ELLA.—Pare four large lemons and boil the peels in six quarts of water, with a little ginger, cut fine. Boil it a quarter of an hour, add to it three pounds of sugar, and when it is cold put in the juice of the lemons and strain it.

MEO.—It is a good plan to put a little turpentine in the starch, then, after the article is ironed, pass a damp rag lightly over it, and apply a hot polishing iron, which is round on face, and if pressed down heavily leaves a beautiful gloss.

A NOVICE.—Voice and manners have much to do with one's success in society; therefore if you think yours could be improved take immediate steps to achieve that result. If you have a taste for recitation take lessons of a good elocutionist.

TOSAY.—Fruits to do their best work should be eaten either on an empty stomach or simply with bread—never with vegetables. In the morning before the fast of the night has been broken they serve as a stimulus to the digestive organs.

ALERE.—Lifting heavy weights is certainly not hurtful if care is taken to regulate the weights to the lifting power, and the practice is not indulged in until the latter becomes fatigued; that would amount to overwork, and strain the muscles.

FATHER.—The eldest daughter, being over age, can elect to live with her mother if she desires to do so, as can also the second daughter, if she is able to support herself. The custody of the boy, who is of tender age, would be given to the mother.

REFORMER.—There are some subjects that only those most interested in them should feel qualified to discuss, and as the parties alluded to may be very sensitive to reproach upon any failing they exhibit your efforts at reform might result in ill-feeling toward you.

POLLY.—The most effective way of cleansing a rusty kettle is to boil a quantity of raw potato skins in it, then wipe out; or fill with cold water and put one pennyworth of vitriol to stand in it all night, rinsing out in morning with clean water, and then wiping dry.

SWEET-TOOTH.—A very nice rice jelly is made as follows: Boil one quarter of a pound of rice flour and half a pound of loaf sugar in one quart of water, until the whole becomes a glutinous mass; then strain off the jelly and let it become cold; grate nutmeg over it, and serve it with cream flavoured with vanilla.

S. R.—The Highland Line is not an established geographical limit at all; it is fanciful, stretching from Dumbarton on the Clyde to the Moray Firth, but it is acknowledged that the higher parts of Aberdeenshire ought to be included within the term Highlands.

PHILIP.—The ancients made their bricks by mixing straw with the clay, and then baking them in the sun-dry. They were never put into the fire. The straw may yet be seen in the bricks to be found amid the ruins of Babylon. It still preserves its natural colour, unburnt.

FLORA.—As a flower giving greatest diversity in shades of colour the carnation is perhaps unique, having flowers of a soft or single colour in pure white, lemon, yellow, buff, terra-cotta, pink, rose, crimson, brilliant scarlet, red, maroon, brown, bluish purple, grey and all intermediate shades.

AMBITION.—Parliamentary influence is the best means of obtaining a Treasury clerkship. When vacancies occur in that department the clerks are moved a step upwards, according to seniority, and the appointment of a junior with seventy or eighty pounds per annum falls to the patronage of one of the lords.

PHYLLIS.—Sponge it with benzine and water, or ammonia and water, till it is cleansed; then either steam it over a kettle of boiling water or let two persons hold it between their hands and iron it on the wrong side with a hot iron; this sets up the pile of the velvet; the colour, of course, has to be taken care of.

SPLINTER.—Splinters should be extracted without delay. When allowed to remain under the skin they often give considerable pain, which is followed by inflammation, that being the process adopted by nature to get rid of the cause of irritation. If the splinter cannot be immediately extracted, bathe the part affected in warm water for a while and then bind around it linen previously dipped in water of the highest temperature.

OUT UNDER THE BEAUTIFUL STARS.

Out under the beautiful stars
We wandered—'twas rare summer weather—
Dear Jenny and I, while the brooklet nigh
And the breeze were singing together.
The birds were asleep in the trees;
The flowers that nodded the lee,
And the blossoming trees in the song-breathing
breeze,
Rocked asleep, undisturbed by the bee.

Beyond as the young silver moon,
Framed in a cloudlet of grey,
Like a great broken ring or a plume from the wing
Of an angel, passed slowly away—
Passed slowly from sight 'mong the hills,
The hills by pale cloudlets caressed,
Whose dim summits high seemed kissing the sky,
The fair sapphire sky in the west.

The night was entrancingly fair—
A picture, a poem, a tale!
And the hour replete with resonance sweet
From the flowers asleep in the vale.
'Twas a night made for lovers and love,
And there neth the beautiful stars
Of silver and gold a love tale was told,
As we stood by the pasture bare.

K. B. L.

IN WANT OF HELP.—Many are too apt to be swayed by those who are self-assertive, and who have the faculty of convincing most with whom they come in contact, that their arguments are incontrovertible. Think for yourself. The result of your thinking may not always be correct, but you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have studied both sides of the question involved, and can give reasons for the conclusions at which you have arrived.

BEVEL.—Wash in warm soap "apple" well brushing them inside and out, then rinse in clean, cold water; next put the hat in a basin or flat dish containing enough scalding water to cover it, a small quantity of oxalic acid having been mixed with the water; hold the hat down in it for five minutes; dry in the sun or before a fire; stiffen with parchment size made by boiling scraps of parchment obtained from a bookbinder, and straining the liquid through muslin.

IGNORANCE.—The Chiltern Hills stretch across Buckinghamshire and the southern part of Oxfordshire. Formerly they afforded lurking places for bands of robbers, and an officer, known as the Steward of Chiltern Hundreds, was employed for the express purpose of keeping them under. The office has long been a sinecure, but is retained in order to afford members of Parliament an opportunity, by accepting office under the Crown, of vacating their seats.

R. P. S.—Take a tablespoonful of fresh butter in a porcelain lined saucepan, simmer the lobster in it for three or four minutes. Mix a heaping teaspoonful of curry powder with half a glass of white wine. Pour this over the lobster and let it simmer for two minutes longer. Meanwhile, have ready a white sauce made as follows: Mix a teaspoonful of butter with a tablespoonful of flour. Add a cup of white broth, and let the whole simmer slowly for ten minutes. Add two egg yolks and the juice of half a lemon to the stock, after it has been drawn to the back of the stove, where it does not boil. Stir this sauce into the lobster with a spoonful of butter, and serve in a traditional border of rice.

G. W.—You might try laying a little damp felt or earth all over the stain, letting it remain on for some time; then rub it gently into the carpet, brush off, and finally wash off, using a little ammonia carbonate in the water to restore colour. Raw spirits of turpentine is sometimes used for removing such stains. It will be necessary to take the oil out of the floor before the carpet is laid down on the place. It is not an easy job.

LADYBIRD.—Take one peck of large cucumbers (suitable for pickling), pare off the rinds, and cut them into slices. Take to this quantity ten onions cut in rounds, sprinkle them with a pint of table-salt, and let them drain in a sieve for six or eight hours; add to them a tablespoonful of black pepper, the same of red pepper, a few blades of mace, a wineglassful of Madeira wine, and two wineglassfuls of sweet oil. Put all into a jar, and fill it with sharp vinegar. This is the only recipe we know. It is one that is rarely asked for.

POLLY HOPKINS.—Canaryseed is the staple food of the parrot, but it is advisable to vary this with other seeds, such as hemp, oats, barley, Indian corn and sunflower seed is especially to be commended; hemp must be given sparingly, as it is heating; Indian corn should be supplied boiled rather than raw, although a few raw grains may be introduced to keep the bird chewing; lettuce leaves, groundsel, and chickweed may be given freely; water should always be supplied; it is sometimes found advisable to give the bird a bit of tough stick to gnaw at.

DEMI ADAMS.—Beat up five ounces each of butter and fine sugar, six ounces of flour, and three eggs well beaten, adding the flour and eggs alternately. Bake this mixture in a shallow tin. When quite cold cut it into rounds with a large pastry cutter; cover these rounds with apricot or peach marmalade, and pile several each above the other. Cover the last layer with a little of the marmalade, and then sprinkle very thickly with black plasticine nuts. Fill the centre with whipped cream, strew it with nuts, and garnish the base with little heaps of the cream and nuts.

DAISY.—A delicious and simple ice cream is composed of one quart of pure cream, one half pound of sugar, one vanilla bean. Put the sugar, half the cream, and the bean split in halves on to boil in a farina boiler. Stir continually for ten minutes. Take the boiler from the fire, take out the bean, and with a blunt knife take out the seeds and the soft part inside of the bean, being careful not to waste any. Mix the seeds thoroughly with the cream, and put away to cool. When cold add the remaining cream, which has not been boiled, and put the whole into a freezer and freeze.

MADON MEADOWS.—Take four cups of milk, two teaspoons corn flour, half pound sugar, one teaspoonful essence of vanilla; beat the milk and add to it the corn flour wet with a little cold milk; let it boil, then stir in the sugar and the vanilla, and set it aside to get quite cold, then freeze it; any other flavour may be added instead of vanilla; lemon or strawberry or a tablespoonful of chocolate may be added with the corn flour, and is good for a change; the cream may be made with skim milk, and an egg put in well beaten up; after it has boiled that makes it a little yellow.

NANCY LEE.—He who lingers beyond the customary hour, and makes it a task for his hostess to entertain him must certainly lack tact or common judgment, for every time he prolongs his visits he is adding to his reputation as a bore, and his coming will be looked forward to with dread. The young man, as a rule, makes a mistake when he overstates his time. Of course, there are occasions when his company may be appreciated without regard to the hour when there are others present to help contribute to the enjoyment of an evening, but under any circumstances he should limit his calls to some prescribed time, unless urged to make an exception to it.

TABBY CAT.—Your favourite cat will probably return to your home after it has found out you are once more there. Your absence from it for so long a time must have impressed the animal with the idea that it would never see you again, and hence its search for other friends of cats. It has generally been believed that cats are more attached to places than to individuals, but this is now declared to be an error. When a house is vacated a cat will be the last to leave it, as it expects the family to return to it, but when a long time elapses and the family does not reappear it will stray away in quest, as we have said, of other habitations in which cats are sheltered.

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